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CHRIST

BY

S. D. M'CONNELL, D.D., LL.D.

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TO

A GREAT SOUL

WHO HAS SEEN THE VISION

AND SHOWN IT TO MEN,

MY FRIEND

WILLIAM S. RAINSFORD, D.D.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

THE WILDERNESS 1

CHAPTER II

THE HUMAN CHRIST 9

CHAPTER III

THE INHUMAN CHRIST 25

CHAPTER IV

JESUS CHRIST 67

CHAPTER V

THE DIVINE CHRIST 103

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRISTIAN MAN 131

CHAPTER VII

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH 157

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHRISTIAN GOD 189

CHAPTER IX

THE KINGDOM 215

"The older I grew, the smaller stress I laid on those controversies and curiosities (though still my intellect abhorreth confusion), as finding greater uncertainties in them than I at first discovered, and finding less usefulness where there is the greatest certainty. The Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments are now to me as my daily bread and drink, and as I can speak and write over them again and again, so I had rather read and hear of them than of any of the school niceties. And this I observed also with Richard Hooker and with many other men." — Richard Baxter.

CHRIST

CHAPTER I

THE WILDERNESS

It seems late in the day, and to some must seem an impertinence, to undertake a new and independent estimate of Christ. Is not the matter settled? Has not the Church explained, defined, formulated, the whole truth in the premises? Are not the Creeds full, explicit, exhaustive? To this I answer, I am not unmindful of Creeds and Christological Systems. Almost every age has tried its hand at painting a portrait of Christ. Some of the limners have been artists of the first genius. They have drawn with insight and colored with truth. But others have been but daubsters, and have blurred the lines drawn by their betters. Others have been base mechanicals, whose pictures are but "item, a nose; item, two eyebrows; item, an ear." Others still have painted caricatures more or less grotesque.

An independent estimate of Christ.

Many paintings on one canvas.

But the misfortune is that all these pictures have been superimposed upon the same canvas. The result is that the doctrinal conception of Christ as it stands to-day in human thought is hopelessly blurred and indistinct. Underlying it all there is the real personality, but it well-nigh passes recognition. Viewed from one standpoint, it shows a poor Pilgrim, weary, dust-covered, ready to faint, knocking at a closed and inhospitable door. In another light one sees a wan, pallid, bloodless figure, hanging on a Cross. In another, a stern Justice upon a judgment seat, surrounded by all the circumstance of a great Assize. In another one discovers a gracious Shepherd, like Apollo with his lute, leading and guiding a flock. In yet another, a divine Majesty, sitting at the right hand of a great king. Which of these is the real Christ?

If it be replied, they are all a single person in many characters, the world asks for some coördinating conception which will set them in some intelligible relation with each other. Lacking this, it turns away in despair of fixing in mind anything definite concerning so protean a person. What is

wanted is a personality with a fixed character of his own, not an actor who in his time plays many parts. The plain fact is, the world is puzzled in the presence of Christ. The alternatives are not, as many fancy, to simply determine whether he is "human" or "divine." Neither of these are simple conceptions. Within either category there is room for one to play countless rôles. When the theologian has pronounced him to be God, or the naturalist has satisfied himself that he is a man, neither of them has got much farther along. Much good logic and good temper have been expended upon this controversy, which, when it is settled, is barren until something further be learned. Even though it were possible, as it is not, to "prove" the Divinity of Christ, what would be gained? The ever pressing question is not "What is this Jesus which is called Christ?" but "Who is he? what is he for? what does he signify to the world?" It is here that confusion reigns.

Divine or human not the antithesis.

No one who looks steadily at what we call the Church can fail to be impressed with the fact that it seems to be hesitating and uncertain. There are in the world

several hundred millions of people who call themselves Christians. They take their common name from the common object of their worship. It would naturally be supposed, therefore, that they held some single and well-defined conception of that person and his purpose and the methods by which he proposed to accomplish it, that they would move and act and think harmoniously toward a common goal. Nothing could be farther from the fact of the case. About the only fixed and hearty conviction entertained by any fragment of this multitude is that the other portions are wrong. Is it surprising that busy men begin to think that that unanimous conviction is correct?

Confused notions of Christians.

All who belong to the Christian Organization confess, lament, deplore this confusion. They see that the divisions are a scandal. They are depressed and distressed by the Church's impotence, and this all the more as they reflect that its *raison d'être* is to present Christ to the world. This absence of unity, the spectacle of separation, estrangement, rivalry, and hostility in the religous sphere, is one of the strangest as well as saddest of things. All confess that it is wrong. They see clearly that it, or some-

Consequent weakness of the Church.

thing else, has well-nigh paralyzed the Church as a force in human society. One of the oldest and strongest of the denominations thus officially states the situation: —

"In spite of the record of what the Church of Christ has done for those races of men who have come under its influence, the majority of men today seem to place small value upon it. It is assumed to be only one of many factors in civilization, and in a general and rather vague way its morality is approved. But it is not taken as the supreme standard of faith and conduct; nor are its experts, Christian ministers so called, regarded as important, and certainly not as essential, members of the community. It is true there is an attitude of respect to the men of this calling, but as counsellors of conduct and physicians of souls they are neither sought nor welcomed."

Recognizing the situation thus far, good men and wise ones are busy trying to bring unity out of this incoherence, to reconcile dogmatic differences and consolidate separated organizations. Their success is strangely scant. All well-meant schemes for organic reunion gain little attention. Compromise Creeds are proposed as bases for doctrinal reunion, compromise Polities for organic

consolidation, and when none of these find credit the churches are fain to be content with some temporary plan of coöperation, in some region as remote as may be from religion.

Different Christs.

The truth is, it is not realized how far down and fundamental the difficulty is. They fancy that because they all call the person whom they adore by the same name they all mean the same thing. They do not. The Christ of the Eastern Church is not the Christ of the West. The Christ of the Roman Mass is not the Christ of the Salvation Army. The Christ of theology is not the Christ of the average pulpit, and neither of these is the Christ of poetry, of art, or of popular thought. The everyday man is lost in a wilderness of definitions, bewildered amid the confused voices of a multitude of messengers all speaking at once and all speaking variant messages.

Let us even suppose that this portrayal of the situation is vastly exaggerated, that underlying all the presentations there is a common conception. Still, we must face the fact that the busy multitude round about the Church believe that the condition is as I have said. The task then must be either

to find the real Christ who has been hidden, or to convince the multitude that they are mistaken. The method would be the same with either end in view.

"To construct out of the Gospels an imaginary portrait of one who neither worked wonders or claimed to be divine, is to invalidate their worth, for it is to literally tear them into shreds. The conception of Christ as superhuman is too completely incorporate in their substance, too subtly inwoven in their tissues, too intimately present in every line, to be removed by any process short of their destruction. Faith in the Incarnation, with all that it involved, has been the sole and exclusive source of our historic Christianity. Yet if Christ were merely man, this was precisely the one point on which either he or his reporters were profoundly wrong. Christianity cannot be due to the goodness and wisdom of a man, marred by a pardonable element of error; for it is solely on that supposed element of error that it rests. Its missionaries and martyrs, its holy and humble men of heart, all of the strongest that human souls have done, all of the saintliest that human eyes have seen, will have derived their inspiration either from folly or from fraud." — "Personality Human and Divine."

CHAPTER II

THE HUMAN CHRIST

"To the Jews a stumbling-block; to the Greeks, foolishness." This is the impression which the presentation of Christ by his messengers made upon two types of men — the conventionally religious and the sceptical. The former class overcame their stumbling-block, as we shall see, by boldly identifying him with the Sacrifice about which all their religious ideas revolved. The sceptical-minded, on the other hand, have endeavored to rescue Christianity from intellectual foolishness by stripping it of all those elements which cannot be conformed to natural reason and experience. They would denude Christ of every miraculous and supernatural quality with the expectation, or at least with the very earnest hope, that there will remain the Ideal Man, the personage which will still compel homage and be a fair object for the soul's adoration.

The motives which lead to this attempt

are very strong, and generally of much moral dignity. Among the multitude of men, sane and earnest-minded men, who utterly reject the Christ of the popular theology, there are two classes to be considered. Probably no better example of the first could be named than the late Mr. Herbert Spencer. The moral ideal of these men is of a very high order. They love righteousness and hate iniquity. They are honest in thought and speech. But they are concerned with all phenomena, chiefly on its intellectual or its practical side. Their emotional life is not very profound, or at any rate not very ebullient. They are more distressed in the presence of intellectual confusion than of moral wrongs. They make large and valuable contributions to the History of Cults, to Comparative Religion, and they manage affairs. They organize Charity, and bring intelligence to the emotion of Philanthropy.

Men who have no creed.

But of religious experience they make no account, and concerning God they say they do not know. Mr. Spencer, for instance, at the beginning of his great "Synthetic Philosophy," relegates God to the

category of the Unknowable, and immortality at the end of it to the Undiscoverable. For the purpose of a philosophy, he has the perfect right to do so. Philosophy is only ordered knowledge, and has no place within it for ordered ignorance. Not a few theologians have proceeded upon the opposite assumption. But these men escape from the perplexities of belief by simply having no creed. They can throw stones with impunity, if they will, because they have no glass houses to be broken. This is the attitude of myriads of men to-day. Few of them are philosophers, and few of them know what the thinkers to whom they trust have really thought. But their general attitude is a vague "agnosticism," which is, being interpreted, the habit of leaving religious questions alone. They are little or not at all exercised about the problem of Christ. By habit and tradition they yield him a place of honor among the world's forces, but they do not bow down their souls before him in adoration any more than they reject him as an usurper. They simply let him alone. The form in which he is presented to them in current Christianity is one against which their conscience and

The practical agnostic.

their intelligence rebel, but there is no other interpretation before them which will compel their attention. I believe that there is such a presentation possible, and, indeed, the prime purpose of this writing is to set it forth; but as things are, this large class have never attempted, or have given up, the problem of Christ.

Men like Dr. Martineau.

Of the other class, no better instance could be offered than the late Dr. James Martineau. This kind of man is both religious and intelligent. He is attracted to the personality of Christ as the moth is to the candle, but he is scorched by the transcendental qualities of the Son of God. He essays, therefore, not to put out the divine light, but to reduce its heat to that degree that he can examine and classify its source. In plain words, he would interpret Christ entirely within the terms of humanity. Can this be done? And is the result worth the pains? I would not speak slightingly or even without reverence of those who, within the last century, have tried to fit the man Jesus to the needs of the human soul. Their motive has been, in the main, high and noble. Much occasion has been given them. The reaction from a dreamy

and artificial theology in Germany, the burden of a savage orthodoxy in America, the tradition of free thought in Great Britain, and the prevalence of the scientific spirit everywhere, — these and other influences have conspired to produce this purely human interpretation of Christ. The wonder is, not that it should have been elaborated, but that it should have impressed the world so little. When one considers the genius, zeal, and devotion of Unitarians, Ethical Culture apostles, Naturalistic biographers of Jesus, of an Emerson, Renan, and Martineau, and when one contemplates the simplicity and fair graciousness of the Christ they portray, the wonder is at their failure to awake any deep or widespread interest in it. The only explanation can be that there is something fundamentally faulty in the figure which they present. Let the explanation be what it may, the Christ held up by them is a figure so wan and pallid, so feeble and evasive, that the world looks at it unmoved. Let us try to see why.

Why does Unitarianism fail to impress?

The first thing to be noticed is that this interpretation of Christ is an essentially modern one. It is plain from the record

that those who came in contact with Jesus were all convinced that he differed in some way from common humanity. A few saw in him something far higher than man, and many something far lower, but all something essentially different. Some explained him as "filled with the spirit," and some as possessed with a devil. Either explanation would remove him from the category of normal humanity. Both explanations were given because some explanation was immediately needed for a personality so bewildering. There was evidently about him "an ambiguous giving out" which marked him off from other men.

Christ's miracles, and his contemporaries.

Nor was it his "miracles or mighty works" which created this impression. The simple fact is that to the world of his time there was no such thing as the "miraculous." The distinction which we make involuntarily between natural and supernatural was a distinction unknown to them. It is quite a modern habit of thought which leads us to set portent and prodigy over against a background of "natural order." They had no such conception as natural order; any or everything might or might not be supernatural. There was nothing surprising to

them in the suggestion that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Actions were by them attributed to God, man, or demons indiscriminately. But here was one who impressed all who came near him as one whose character had in it some touch of divine or diabolic, or possibly of both. This might, no doubt, be a poor argument for the reality of his miracles, seeing that they did not have any scientific conception of what a miracle is, but it is plain evidence that they took him to be something quite out of the common run of humanity.

Nor was it on account of his superlative goodness that they took him to be unique. To them his goodness was by no means evident. Such as it was, it was of a sort which did not fit with their moral preconceptions. As a matter of fact, the multitudes who believed him to be something different from men did not believe him to be good. It was simply that there was about him something, undefinable but unmistakable, which attracted, repelled, compelled, or baffled, but which led them naturally to regard him as a man apart. It is conceivable that they were mistaken,

They did not think him good.

but there can be no doubt as to the impression. This was true of his enemies as well as his friends. Neither the scribes and pharisees nor, later on, Celsus or Porphyry, tried to deal with him as with an ordinary man. They never called his miracles in question. Even the arch heretic Arius — often mistakenly called "the first Unitarian" — never thought of classifying him among men. The Christ of Arius was a personality so transcendental and exalted as would startle many a champion of orthodoxy who might meet him. Arius's heresy was not that he did not ascribe divinity to him, but that he did not allow him divinity enough.

It is really only within the last century that any serious attempt has been made to confine Christ within the terms of humanity. The result is not convincing to the everyday man's intelligence, and the process by which it is reached offends his moral sense. The only data we possess are the writings of the New Testament. The unsophisticated reader is convinced that here we have the memorabilia of unique personality. It is not a natural memoir which has become overlaid and obscured with

Natural and supernatural fused together.

supernatural portents. Excrescences can indeed be removed from it without doing it violence. But when it is dissected, it bleeds. What we are in the habit of distinguishing as natural and supernatural are so grown together in the record of Jesus' life and of his manifest self-consciousness that they cannot be separated. When that is violently done, the residuum is either a mutilated cadaver or a formless, artificial, and unstable construction. When one follows the motions of a scholar or historian trying to remove the miraculous from the record, he is likely at first to be curious and interested, but as the process goes on, a feeling of contemptuous irritation overtakes him. The whole story may conceivably be a myth, a legend, or a fabrication; but it must be taken or left substantially as it stands. Naturalistic interpretation of it, however learned or acute, becomes solemn trifling.

Paltry rationalizing.

Neither Christian nor pagan can contemplate with patience a process which makes the turning water into wine at Cana "an innocent wedding pleasantry"; stilling the waves of the stormy sea "a happy coincidence"; the healing of the blind beggar to have been effected by means of "the well-

known healing efficacy of a mixture of human saliva with earth"; the cure at Siloam to have been by "taking the waters" of a medicinal spring; feeding the five thousand, "by hypnotic suggestion"; the transfiguration, "a sort of mirage caused by the refraction of sunlight in mountain mist"; the Resurrection to be a "recovery from a long swoon"; the Ascension to be "the interposition of a mountain cloud." The plain truth is, this can satisfy nobody. If the things did not occur, let us say so, but let us not say at the same time that they did and did not happen. The honest man feels that it is more dignified, at any rate, and he believes more religious, to reject the Gospel altogether than to accept it in this fashion.

The poverty-stricken residuum.

Again, let us say, it is conceivable that all this portentous element is legendary and pious imaginings, covering up the actual life of a man, and that criticism can remove it and recover the real personage. But what is the use of doing it? For what is left? "Only the threadbare story of an itinerant rabbi, wise and virtuous, who preached a pure morality, became possessed with the notion that he was the Messiah, and man-

aged, by means of a healing power with which he was gifted and by dint of good luck, to persuade a few silly people that he was such. He was persecuted by the magistrates and clergy because he denounced their corruption and hypocrisy. He died as a malefactor, and he remained dead, like another man." One need not press the meagreness of this poverty-stricken story. Its historical emptiness is of small moment beside the moral damage wrought by its exhibition. It not only does violence to the spirit of history and literature, but the average man feels it to be essentially disingenuous; and this suspicion of unreality passes over and attaches itself to the Christ thus portrayed. Men are, after all, more amenable to a religion which is over credulous than to one which they suspect to be tricky.

I am quite aware that this presentation of the case will be repudiated by some as crude, not to say brutal. For it is the truth that the naturalistic Christian ever shrinks from the conclusions of his own logic. Hovering above the crucible in which he has reduced the Gospel story, he pleases himself by discerning an iridescent ghost

Devout rationalist shrinksfrom his logic.

which he takes in all sincerity to be the spirit of Christ. Its outlines, so far as it has any "distinguishable in member, joint, or limb," are those of a fair and benignant Man — wise, gracious, tender, true. His words are as celestial music, his life an idyl, his strength is as the strength of ten. He is humanity's Ideal. His spectral hand points a stern finger at the proud, or lies in soothing benediction upon the sweaty forehead of the poor and pain-stricken. He makes life tolerable by his living, and death dignified by his dying.

The phantom Christ.

For a few souls this ethereal Christ suffices; but a lambent phantom it is, for the real Christ has disappeared in the crucible. A few souls, of a rare and noble mould, have found satisfaction and uplift in this Christ of Criticism. But it may be fairly questioned whether, after all, their religious sentiment has not reinvested their Ideal Man with those qualities of which their intelligence has stripped him. It would be difficult otherwise to account for or to justify the terms of lowly reverence which they use concerning him. Their admiration runs on, in spite of themselves, to adoration. But for the average man, under the

pain and stress of living, the conception is too meagre, thin, unsubstantial. It is a pleasing melody upon a slender pipe, but has in it no rolling harmony in which deep answers unto deep. It has nothing to say to the tragic side of life. It only adds to the dark perplexity another tragedy, — the most wanton, pitiful, and meanest of them all, — the martyrdom of the Ideal Man. If offered as a stay and consolation solely, we must confess that that devoted life is of little use. The diaphanous Man thus distilled from the Gospel story is too remote and subtile, too bloodless and inhuman, to stir the emotions or inflame the will. To the woman approaching the hour of her agony and peril, to the man confronting failure, to the soul in the throes of temptation, this delicately fashioned Christ has little power to minister.

This single consideration would seem to be sufficient to account for the smallness of the effect which this conception of Christianity has produced, despite the noble names upon its rolls. Poetry and Art have found little in it. Its hymn books are jejune, its liturgies lack vigor, the masses of the people will have naught to do with

The tragic side of life unsatisfied.

it. And this in the face of the fact that its adherents have been and are among the world's most devoted as well as wisest benefactors. It is a gospel which has no evangelic potency. To account for this by affirming that the mass of men are too crass and unintelligent to comprehend it, is to condemn it utterly. A Philosophy which is too exalted to be comprehended by any save the chosen few may be all the more respectable on that account. But a Religion which cannot touch the common people, or which even presupposes a high intelligence, is self-condemned. Not the least profound of the sayings of Jesus is this: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Wherever men imagine themselves to be shut up to the choice between this Christ of the illuminati and the Christ of bloody Hebrew-pagan cult, they will choose the latter. Through it they can at least in some crude way express the tragic experience of living. The pathos of it all is that they should imagine themselves shut within these two alternatives.

"If my feeble prayer can reach thee
O my Saviour, I beseech thee,
Even as thou hast died for me,
More sincerely
Let me follow where thou leadest,
Let me, bleeding as thou bleedest,
Die, if dying I may give
Life to one who asks to live,
And more nearly,
Dying thus, resemble thee."

—"Golden Legend."

"In an inscription from the Egyptian monuments, the original of which dates back to the early days of Moses, there is reference to a then ancient legend of the rebellion of mankind against the gods; of an edict of destruction against the human race; and of a divine interposition for the rescue of the doomed people. In that legend a prominent place is given to human blood, which was mingled with the juice of mandrakes and offered as a drink to the gods, and afterward poured out to overflow and revivify the earth. And the ancient text affirms that it was in conjunction with these events that sacrifices began in the world."

— Trumbull, "Blood Covenant."

CHAPTER III

THE INHUMAN CHRIST

The historical fact is that Jesus was put to death as a malefactor. The times were cruel, and so it happened that the mode of his death was by crucifixion. It took place on the common execution ground, on a bald, round hill, outside the city wall of Jerusalem. To a Western visitor at the capital the sight had nothing noteworthy about it. He scarcely singled it out for notice from among the hundreds of crosses in every province upon which he had seen men writhing during his travels in the East. If he did make any special inquiry about this offender, he was told that he had been a rather interesting, and probably quite harmless, man, a dreaming Jew, who had promulgated vague notions about a new social and political order, and had gathered about him a considerable following. It was a pity that he had to be taken seriously, indeed the governor himself had tried to save him from the con-

Christ and the official world.

sequences of his own indiscretion, but then, you know, the laws concerning sedition are very stringent, and none of the laws take much account of persons or motives, and so the poor man blundered into his fate. It is a pity. So the official world answered.

Christ and the religious world.

The religious world explained that this was a very pestilent and dangerous fellow. He was utterly without reverence, jested about our most hallowed and long established institutions, spoke scurrilous abuse of priests and dignitaries, held and taught loose and dangerous notions about God and religion, broke the holy sabbath day, told the rabble, for instance, that harlots and tax farmers were more worthy people than even magistrates and clerics. He was a dangerous demagogue, all the more dangerous because of his strangely attractive personality and the diabolic charm of his eloquence. Something had to be done with him. Even though no specific charge could very well be brought against him, it was better that he should be put out of the way than that the whole people should be jeopardized. He was leading them inevitably to anarchy, atheism, and rebellion. He has simply come to the end that such men always reach.

The crowd that seethed around the cordon of spear points which ringed the bloody square, and mocked at the man upon the middle cross, explained that he was an exposed fraud and impostor, that he had deluded them with glittering promises about a new Kingdom which he was about to inaugurate, a Kingdom in which there should have been no rich and no poor, where all should have share and share alike, a kingdom the least of whose citizens should sit on thrones judging the peoples, a kingdom in which all should be priests and kings, in which every sick and ailing one would have his ills cured by magic, where would be no oppression, poverty, or toil. All these things he promised, and now he has shown himself unable to even save his own back from the scourge or his own flesh from the Roman cross. We are delighted that he has been found out.

Christ and the masses.

A few timid and terrified friends who knew him best looked on from a safe distance, broken-hearted. Here was the truest and noblest man they had ever known or imagined. He had steadfastly set his face toward right and goodness, he had told the truth to priest and publican alike, he had

His disappointed friends.

led his friends near to God, his speech had been as the speech of an angel, he had been pure and sweet and lovable beyond telling, they had even hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel. But, somehow, he had managed to excite the hostility of all the powers, he had been injudicious and careless about offending, he had said things about himself which when misinterpreted had the color of blasphemy. Now all these hateful forces have closed in about him and brought him to an ignominious and horrible end. And they looked him a despairing and final farewell.

A single mercenary of the legion, leaning indifferently with arms folded around his spear shaft, heard the broken sentences which fell from the dying man's bloody lips, and marked his bearing, dignified even in his extremity, and muttered to himself that this time at any rate the law had miscarried, this man was surely innocent.

This is what the spectators saw at Calvary, — and this is all they saw, — a middle-aged man was being crucified. When he was dead they went their ways, having seen all there was to see.

But for many centuries myriads of Chris-

tian eyes have converged upon the same scene, and have discerned in it, or believe they have seen in it, a thing which was not visible to the lookers-on. To their eyes the Cross has been transformed into an Altar; the Man has been transmuted into a Lamb; the crucified Galilæan has become a Great High Priest; the soldier with stained spear has become an unsuspecting Levite; the gushing blood has become etherealized into smoke ascending to the gratified nostrils of an angry God; the turbid crowd have become, all unconscious, the beneficiaries of a Sacrifice offered under the dome of heaven for all the inhabitants of earth.

The pagan transformation.

May the event in history be thus construed? Is this the true interpretation of that great world-tragedy? If not, what will explain and account for the strange and ghastly fiction? We cannot disguise the situation. If this interpretation be not true to reality, we must deny one of the most widely current and generally accepted notions about Christ present in the Christian world. I say accepted, rather than believed, for when the notion is plainly stated in terms with which the understanding can deal, its intrinsic incoherence and its ethical

Popular atonement.

monstrosity must compel its rejection. Nevertheless, it remains as one of those idols of the imagination before which generations have prostrated themselves, and whose grim hideousness is hidden from the devotees by the smoke of their own incense. Of all the religious conceptions actually existent within Christendom, this is probably the one most widely diffused. Most Christians would indeed be likely to aver that underlying all their doctrinal and ecclesiastical disagreements they are at one in what they would call the fundamental belief that Christ was a Sacrifice offered to appease the anger of an outraged God, and that it has been so far efficacious that it has left God with no valid claim against any man who takes the proper steps to interpose this safeguard between God's judgments and himself.

Deemed a fundamental doctrine.

> "O tree of glory, tree most fair,
> Ordained those holy limbs to bear,
> How bright in purple robe it stood,
> The purple of a Saviour's blood!
>
> "Upon its arms, like balance true,
> He weighed the price from sinners due,
> The price which none but he could pay,
> And spoiled the spoiler of his prey."

It is the burden of the Roman Mass and the Hallelujah lasses' exhortation, of the revival-

ist's hymns and the cultus of the Sacred Heart. It is the gloomy theme of mediæval art, hangs darkly about the stained glass of cathedral windows, is enshrined in a myriad pyxes, and is what the wayfaring man takes to be the central article of the Christian creed at present. It holds conspicuous place in the accredited formularies of the largest Christian churches. The Greek Church says: "He has done and suffered in our stead all that was necessary for the remission of our sins." — MACAIRE, "Orthodox Theology," Ch. 88, Sec. 153.

Set forth in Confessions.

The Roman Church says: "It was a sacrifice most acceptable unto God, offered by his Son on the altar of the cross, which entirely appeased the wrath and indignation of the Father."—"Catechism," Coun. Trent, XV.

The Westminster Confession of Faith says: "The Lord Jesus by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and hath purchased reconciliation and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven for all whom his Father hath given him."

The two conceptions upon which the dogma rests are, appeasement of an angry

God by pain, and substitution of a victim in the room and stead of an offender. We must hold the dogma to its real and intended meaning. A noticeable tendency is evident in contemporary orthodoxy to retain the terms of the doctrine while throwing overboard its contents. It has begun to be realized in many quarters that both its ethical conception of God and its moral estimate of man are unworthy. But the attempt is being made to save that sacrosanct thing called "sacrifice" by giving it an exalted and unnatural meaning. This must not be allowed. It has been held before the world for ages as the true interpretation and presentment of the essential meaning of Christ. If it be not true, it ought to be cast out as an intruder within the holy place. Propitiation of God by sacrifice and the transference of righteousness from the innocent to the guilty are of the very essence of it. But these are both survivals from an ancient paganism. To outroot them was the purpose of Judaism and Christianity. In this Judaism failed, and perished through being itself slowly transformed into an idolatry. Christianity has been saved from a like failure only because it has within it the living

The doctrine must not be allowed to wear a disguise.

Christ. But the time must come, and ought not to be far distant, when his work among men will be interpreted in terms and images freed from the taint of outgrown savagery, terms which will not offend the moral sense of a world which has been led to leave such ethical *betises* far behind.

Propitiatory sacrifice belongs at a stage of development through which all peoples pass. At that stage God and the devil for them are one. They suspect themselves to be in the presence of unseen powers which are able to help or hurt. Their gods are even such as they themselves are. If they are unwilling, they can be bribed; if they are angry, they can be appeased by presents. The African savage offers his demon a goat, the South Sea islander placates his god with a plantain, the Phœnician mother burns her child to please Moloch, the Mexican priest tears the heart from a comely youth and holds it dripping toward the heavens. The motive is everywhere the same. It is to avert the anger or to bribe the good offices of a god. At a somewhat later stage the "scapegoat" idea enters. Every year at the Thurgelia the Athenians dragged a man and a woman to the brink of the Acropolis and

Religion of the world's childhood.

hurled them to death that they might bear away a year's sins from the city of the Violet Crown. The Romans threw their victims from the Tarpeian Rock to the same end. In Babylon a young man was crucified at each summer solstice to bear away the sins of the people.

It has been a fond device of theology to interpret all these cruel customs as unconscious prophecies of the Great Sacrifice to be made at the right time for the sins of the whole world, as but fragmentary shadows of the Cross flung backward along the dim pathway of human history. Especially has this been claimed for the bloody rites of the people Israel. This claim is utterly without support. The whole weight of evolutionary science and ordered history is against it. These phenomena are coming to be more and more intelligible, and indeed to have a worth of their own, but this is because they are seen to be the natural and spontaneous expression of religion at a stage of evolution where men are otherwise ignorant and brutal. They bear the same relation to the religion of Christ that the crude moral judgments of savage man do to the morality of Jesus. The attempt to interpret him in

Sacrifice and Evolution.

terms of primitive cult is to shut up the sun of righteousness in troglodytic caves.

Nor ought we to be any longer misled by the theory that the institutes of Moses and the Levitical system bear any different relation to Christ. The Sacrificial System was no institute of Moses, either with or without divine sanction. What that great religious master did in the region of worship was the counterpart of what he effected in the sphere of Law. When, for example, he fixed the law of retaliation at "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," he was not establishing a code of vengeance. On the contrary, he was confining within the narrowest bounds possible a custom of vengeance universally prevalent. It was an incalculable gain over what went before to limit the thirst for retaliation within the bounds of a rough-and-ready equity. The avenger must not hurt the victim *more* than he himself had been wronged. The whole Mosaic code was, moreover, wonderfully designed to eliminate those "wild justices" which at that time it could do no more than restrain. So with Sacrifice. It was an ethnic custom, universal, extravagant, prodigal, cruel. The backward people whom Moses led knew no

Not an institute of Moses.

other mode in which to express their piety. What he did was to limit the custom within the narrowest bounds possible at the time and place. He did not pronounce it good, nor did he contemplate its perpetuity. His successors among the prophets strove continuously to give the everyday devotion of the people a higher and more reasonable direction. Their ideal was not at all the culmination and crowning of the custom in a Victim whose value would be absolute and pain infinite. They looked for the custom and the conception of God upon which it rested to perish and be left behind. They assert roundly that there never was a divine provision for it.[1]

The history of Israel is as simple as it is melancholy. The Prophets and the Hierarchy strove together throughout its whole course. Finally the voice of the prophet ceased and the priests remained in possession. Five centuries before Christ that System which was not of Moses but elaborated in pagan Babylon, was set up in all its gorgeous barbarity, and from that time on the moral declension of the Hebrews was steady and inexorable. Religion was for them the

Decadence of Judaism.

[1] Jer. vii. 22; Hos. vi. 6; Ps. ii. 66.

placation of a god by gifts; holiness was a ceremonial cleanliness with no moral quality. The prophet had cried in vain his "thus saith the Lord, to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? I am surfeited with the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he goats. Who hath required this at your hands when ye come to tread my courts?" It was a religion of the shambles and the medicine man, and broke itself to pieces against the Son of Man. His direction was to bury it out of sight in the cemetery of the dead.

A pagan idol on Christian altar!

And yet within three centuries of his crucifixion we find this ancient idol enthroned upon the altar of the Christian Church! What will explain or account for the substitution of this hideous changeling in the holy cradle? How comes it that the God of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ became identified with Moloch, and the Babe of Bethlehem with the child of a Philistine woman? That the cross was interpreted to the conscience in terms intelligible only to Levites and Shamans? It is, alas, only too easy to account for it. But before entering upon the attempt to explain the presence of this

misconception of Christ's work it would be well, if possible, to estimate the mischief it has wrought. Probably most Christian Ministers will agree that it is growing increasingly difficult for them to gain a hearing for their Gospel. They will agree also that those most difficult to win are the good men rather than the bad ones. The late Professor Bruce — whose orthodoxy none will question — has left on record these strange words: "I am disposed to think that a great and increasing portion of the moral worth of society lies outside the Christian Church, separated from it not by godlessness, but rather by exceptionally intense moral earnestness. Many, in fact, have left the church in order to be Christians."

Good men standing aloof from Christianity.

The reasons commonly assigned for this arrest in the progress of Christianity are no doubt real reasons. They are such as, the enormous increase in material progress and luxury; the bewildering advance in human knowledge; the restless commercial activity which marks the epoch; the domination of the physical sciences; the stubborn moral obtuseness of the masses, and such like. But over against these stand the facts that the intellectual activity and scepticism of

the Western world of to-day is probably far less than that of the Greek world to which the Apostles preached; that the luxury and self-indulgence which encompass the church of to-day is not a circumstance compared with that of the Roman world of the Cæsars; that the moral darkness of society in our time is light itself by contrast with the world in which primitive Christianity won its triumphs.

But there is this difference: the religion which the Apostles preached was one whose moral ideals commanded the homage of all souls which it touched. This remained true also for centuries, even after the bleeding Christ became the symbol of Christianity. Low and unworthy as was the plan of salvation proffered to the Gauls and Franks, to the Lombards and the Northmen, it was still immeasurably above the ethical standards of their own religions. It is a commonplace of historical reflection that during late centuries missionary zeal has accomplished smaller triumphs than during the first centuries or in the Middle Ages. No people has been converted to Christianity for nearly a thousand years. There are, no doubt, many explanations of this. But

Christianity and moral ideals.

there is one which the Christian man cannot contemplate but with pain. It is that the moral ideals of men have overtaken and passed beyond and above those contained in the doctrinal presentations of Christianity. Endless labor has been expended to remove the intellectual obstacles in the way. It is time to remind ourselves that the real difficulties are moral ones. Not unworthy Christians alone, but an unworthy Christ is the stumbling-block. It is the bald fact that the dogma of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, which has for so long been exhibited as the central truth of Christianity, is now rejected by a society whose moral sense has outgrown it. The whole scheme of which it forms the logical basis is felt to be immoral as well as untrue.

Moral ideals leaving religion behind them.

The average man of to-day does not believe that human nature is but the moral wreck and débris of an Edenic man. He refuses to believe that guilt is hereditary in any sense, though he knows well that sin is. He believes that the law against the attainder of blood is written in the constitution of the universe. He will not believe that a course of action which would be wrong for a man can be right for God.

The position of men to-day.

He believes that justice and equity are the same things for God that they are for man. The human idea of justice demands that penalty shall fall upon the person who offends, and not upon some one in his stead, even though the king furnish the victim and the substitute be ever so willing. At a certain stage in moral progress Zaleucus, king of the Locrians, could be admired and revered. His law demanded that the adulterer should lose his eyes. When his own son was convicted of the offence, his father, to save the sanctity of his law and at the same time allow his love to act, commanded that one of his son's eyes and one of his own should be pulled out. The world of that day looked upon Zaleucus as a miracle of goodness; the world of to-day can see in him only a fond and feeble tyrant.

The law of justice universal.

Religious thought no longer moves among governmental ideas and legal fictions. It has become biological. In the processes of the spirit the watchwords are not justification, but development; not salvation, but character; its antitheses are not acquittal and condemnation, but living and perishing. It is known that hereditary evil is a force

Only moral realities recognized.

which works within the life, and not a penal inheritance passed down from an ancestor. It believes that righteousness *is* salvation, and that nothing else is. It believes that righteousness in men is the wish of God, and that it always was his wish, and they do not believe that there is now or ever was in the nature or statutes of God any obstacle which had first to be removed before men could be permitted to begin to be good, or in order that God might think their goodness good. To a world at this stage "vicarious" redemption cannot be preached. They will not accept it at any price. If they be still assured that this is really God's method, they will answer, with John Stuart Mill, "I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-men; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."

False analogies for expiation.

The well-meant attempts to find analogies for the doctrine in the experiences of life are rejected by the intelligence and the conscience both alike. Every one knows that the good and the innocent are always suffering for the faults of the bad. But

every one knows also that this suffering does not lessen but increases the blameworthiness of them who take advantage from this pain. Every martyr of a holy cause sacrifices himself deliberately, but that does not render innocent the multitude who stone him. The soldier lays down his life on the field to save his country, but this does not lessen the guilt of the enemy who kills him. The mother starves herself that her children may eat bread; the engineer goes down to death with his hand on the reverse lever, that the passengers may be saved; the merchant pays his friend's debt to save his friend's good name. But none of these sacrifices have anything in common with that interpretation of Christ's death which we denounce. In none of these transactions is there anything like a transference of moral status or an "imputation" of righteousness. They are all, indeed, gathered up within that eternal cross-bearing which is the concomitant of loving. In the heart of their blessed company is indeed the eternal Soldier, Martyr, Mother-soul, who was crucified in God before the world was. But they have nothing in common with a victim

No transference of moral quality.

bound upon an altar and immolated by a priest.

Who follows in his train?

"The Son of God goes forth to war
A kingly crown to gain.
His blood-red banner streams afar,
Who follows in his train?

"Who best can drink his cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below,
Triumphant over pain.

"A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,
In robes of light arrayed.

"They climb the steep ascent of heaven,
Triumphant over pain;
O God, may grace to us be given
To follow in their train!"

To see the difference between the two conceptions of sacrifice one has but to contrast that noble song with this, —

Who hides behind him?

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy side a healing flood,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from guilt and make me pure.

"Should my tears forever flow,
Should my zeal no languor know,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and Thou alone;
In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

And then call to mind the classic sayings of Jesus, "If any man would be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow after me." And, "Not every one who sayeth unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Bearing the cross for one's self.

The Christ is, as we will in the proper place try to see, a personality so exalted, and his functions so fundamental and overarching, that it is little wonder the indolent mind and feeble will are content with a formula for Him that lays little strain upon either. It is inconceivably easier to sing "simply to Thy cross I cling," than it is to take up one's cross and follow in his footsteps. The ecstatic self-abandonment of St. Francis of Assisi is ease itself compared with the practical devotion of St. Simon of Cyrenia. The one hangs upon the cross like a lazy lurdan, the other lifts it upon his own shoulders and lightens by that much the burden of the Son of Man.

"Redemption."

In popular speech the essential content of the dogma is expressed by the word "redemption." The word means to buy off, or to buy back. It is a commercial term.

The captive held in bondage by Barbary pirates or Sicilian brigands is bought and set free. The Order of Redemptorists took its name from this. They were redeemers.

Paying a price for guilt.

In Teutonic custom the convicted felon could compound for a price, so much for a limb, so much for an eye, so much for a life. But in what does this resemble the action which warranted Bishop Bienvenu to say to Valjean, "You are mine; I have bought you"? or that on account of which the Apostle could say to the Christians, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price"? Christ's blood a ransom paid to the devil to buy off poor damned souls held in his clutches? a price paid to an angry God to allay his fury? the satisfaction-piece of a bond paid to a Shylock Justice? Each and every one of these contentions has been maintained by grave and respectable systematizers. Augustine, Anselm, Calvin, Luther, these are great names. They have laid their hands upon the souls of millions, dead and living. Honestly believing that they were preaching Christ, they have propagated a gloomy paganism, which has gone far to render the cross of Christ of none effect.

It avails nothing to be told that these gross conceptions are misrepresentations and caricatures of the doctrine of the Atonement as actually held and taught by intelligent and well-informed Christians. They are not caricatures; they are photographs. Nor will it serve to say with the late Archbishop Magee that, "so far as they have any color of plausibility they rest upon the impassioned rhetoric of the pulpit and hymn book." Even if this were the case, it is to be remembered that the pulpit and hymn book are the accredited vehicles upon which religious teaching is chiefly borne to the people. If their burden is a false one, it will rightly be taken for the real one. No; what the Archbishop calls "this reversion to the worst ideas of pagan sacrifice, savoring of the heathen temple and reeking of blood," is woven into the very fabric of Confessions, Articles, and Liturgies. And most depressing of all, it is seriously defended by scientific Theology. The writers of that volume, "Lux Mundi," may be taken as the illuminati of their kind. Its article upon the Atonement is a reasoned defence of the principle of propitiation, and it finds its rationale in the Levitical System. "There

The naked dogma.

it is, divinely ordained, clearly necessary and profoundly significant, pointing to and foreshadowing a perfect Expiation." And, "The death of Christ is the expiation of those past sins which have laid the burden of guilt upon the human soul, and is also the propitiation of the wrath of God." The fact cannot be disguised that the moral conceptions of current religion have been left behind by the moral sense of Christian society.

We come back now to the question of how to account for the existence and persistence of a presentation of Christ which the moral sense rejects. I have said that it is only too easy to account for, and so it is, so far as concerns the historic law which controls in such cases. As in commerce a debased currency always tends to drive a precious one out of circulation, so in religion and philosophy a low conception can hold the field long against a noble one. This is what has occurred in the Christian kingdom. But this brings us to the place where we should discover when, and where, and how, the spiritual currency of Christ became debased, when and how his coin came to have stamped on one side a sacrificial bull, and on the other a mitred priest.

Debased and precious currency.

To begin with, let us ask the plain question, Did Jesus himself conceive of himself as a propitiatory sacrifice, or his work as an expiation? The only answer possible is, Clearly he did not. With the exception of two phrases attributed to him, and which we will look at more carefully after a little, there is not the shadow of a suggestion that such an idea ever entered his mind. And there is everything in his whole life to show that the whole circle of ideas in which this conception is embedded was abhorrent to him. It is true that the record of his teaching is fragmentary and incomplete, but there is quite enough in the Gospels to show what he believed himself to be, and to be doing. If the primal and controlling purpose of the Incarnation had been to propitiate the wrath of God by means of a painful life and death, surely he would somewhere have said so. But it is the one thing which he does not say. And can any interpretation of him be admissible which finds no color in his own words? He has much to say about himself, indeed, he speaks of himself so constantly that his auditors came to resent it. He presents his mission and himself in every form which, as it

What was Jesus' opinion?

What he claimed to be.

seemed to him, would throw light upon it. He represents himself as a Light, to reveal God, and to illuminate the dark places of life. He is a Shepherd leading a flock, guarding it against rapacious beasts, feeding it, seeking the mavericks, carrying the lambs in his bosom. He is a Physician, diagnosing the ills of men, prescribing medicaments for their cure, laying actual balms upon their sores. He is a Tribune of the people, disturbing the world's dull and ignoble peace, setting a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against the mother. He is Bread, wholesome for the soul's food and needful to maintain life. He is Water, to assuage the soul's thirst and lave the heart's fever. He is Leaven, to stir the ferment in the world's sodden lump which shall save it from decay. He is Salt, to keep the world's life wholesome and save it from corruption. He is the Vine, whose juices mount to the remotest branch and swell the fragrant clusters. He is the Door, newly opened toward the eternal realities, through which men go in and out and find peace. He is the Preacher, with a message of consolation to them that are cast down, and of warning to the proud. He is the

Landlord's Son, who comes to correct the abuses of the husbandmen in the management of the vineyard. He is the Strong Man, the Bridegroom, the Judge, the Christ of the Living God. But he does not call himself the world's Priest, or the world's Victim. That he expected and intended to suffer and die is plain enough. He dwelt upon the fact to his friends' consternation. But he nowhere placed upon his suffering and death the interpretation which it afterward came to bear. In all his sayings which have been preserved, he gives the clear impression that he took his pain and privation and death as being "in the day's work," incidental and unavoidable necessities of the task which he had undertaken, but not as the task itself. They were the price which he had to pay for being what he was. But there is no intimation that he attributed to them any sacrificial or propitiatory value.

What he did not claim to be.

To the above statement there are just two exceptions. What we have to say about them may best be introduced by showing them in their context. They are these: —

The two exceptions.

"Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping, and desiring a cer-

tain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said unto her, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, *and to give his life a ransom for many.*"

and, —

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, *which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*"

The significant phrases are those in italics, "to give his life a ransom for many," and, "shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xx. and xxvi., "λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν," and "εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτεῶν"). Now, let it be well kept in mind that these are the only two sayings attributed to Christ himself which give any color to the contention that he regarded himself in the light of a propitiatory sacrifice. And let it be further borne in mind, that they are not only foreign to but directly opposed to the whole tenor of his teaching. The question then naturally arises, Where and when, and upon whose authority are the words placed in his mouth? If it should appear that they are in perfect accord with a conception which appears later in the New Testament, and that they cannot be made to agree with the teaching of Christ, what then? Only this: we will be obliged to confront the fact that there is to be found within the writings of the New Testament a theory concerning the meaning of Christ's work which his own words condemn.

Whence comes the ransom idea?

That great and complex thing which we call Christianity has from a very early time contained within it the facts about

Christianity a fact and an interpretation.

its Founder, and also theoretical interpretations of those facts. We maintain that the interpretation in question was a mistaken one, and also that the mistake was a natural one, however disastrous its effects may have proved to be. To be more specific, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for example, construed Christ in terms of Hebrew Sacrifice; St. Paul construed him in mixed terms of Hebrew Sacrifice and Roman Law. In this they both perilously misconstrued him. But that construction began to obtain before the Gospel was committed to a written form. The wonder is not that there are traces of it in the Gospels, but that they are colored by it so little.

The phrase in which the word "ransom" occurs is in two of the Gospels. When looked at carefully it awakes the feeling that it is a pious reflection from a later time, appended to a striking narrative which is preserved in the two Gospels in almost identical words. The mother of two of the disciples approached the Master at a time when his popularity was great, and when it looked as though his new state might be set up almost immediately. According to one Gospel she,

and to another her two sons for themselves, bespoke high and honorable offices. His reply is characteristic. It is in effect: — "You do not understand the situation. If my kingdom were to be like the political powers you have in mind, your request would be natural, whatever might be said as to its taste. That is the very way that place seekers act, and you are not to be blamed. But do you realize the cost which will attend upon its establishment? Are you able to pay the price?"

A pious reflection from a later time.

When they replied that they thought themselves able to endure as much as he could, he answered: "You will that, but when it is done you will be disappointed. For in my kingdom the reward of greatness will not be honors, but service. The greatest will be he who serves best, even as I myself came not to be served but to serve."

The thing to be noted is that the argument of the incident is completed at this point. The appended phrase "*and to give myself a ransom*," introduces an idea entirely foreign to the matter in hand. One cannot but feel that it does not belong there. It gives an impression that it bears the same kind of relation to the recital of facts as

A theological interpretation.

does that other formula so common in St. Matthew, "in order that the words of the prophet might be fulfilled." Over and over again when he records some speech or act of Christ he assigns as the reason for the action or remark, "that the prophecy might be fulfilled." This is the motive which the annalist imputes to the actor, whereas the fact itself shows that it had place for its own sake. What he saw in it, however, was not so much its intrinsic value as its vindication of Prophecy. It looks as though we had here a similar interpolation in the interest of theology.

Gospels written traditions.

It must not be forgotten that the Gospels are traditions committed to writing. The earliest written was at least thirty-five years after the death of Christ. Meantime his sayings had been kept alive in memory and passed on from mouth to ear. Thirty-five years is a good while, more than a generation. If during that time a theory concerning the Master's life and work had gained currency, it is only to be expected that it would show its influence in shaping the tradition. That such a theory did become elaborated within that period we shall see. But we shall also see

that it did not come to prevail in such a way as to shape the common thought and speech of Christians until a much later date. It seems therefore more reasonable to believe that the two phrases which convey the ideas of "ransom" and propitiatory "remission" are placed in our Lord's mouth by a later tradition than that they were used by him, and intended to present a conception of himself which is irreconcilable with his own plain words.

The figment of literal inspiration.

Of course it will be evident that this way of looking at things disregards the dogma of plenary and infallible "inspiration" of Holy Scripture. I do not pause to controvert or even to state that dogma. To all useful purposes it has been abandoned by Christian thought. Effectively for English-speaking people it was dislodged from its last intrenchment by the making and promulgation of the "Revised Version." Not that this was the intention of the revisers, but it was nevertheless the result. The Revised Version is in many ways and places different from the one current before it. If that one has had mistake established against it, no one can maintain that the present one is final. When that fact once got lodgment in

the common mind, the dogma of infallible inspiration became thereafter impossible. The only form in which it can be held is that "the original manuscripts as they left the hands of the writers" possessed this quality. But as those manuscripts have long ago been lost beyond recovery, reasonable men will not spend much time upon the academic question as to whether they did or did not possess this property. The energy of Christian scholars is being expended to more purpose in trying to find out what they really did say, and under what circumstances and under what influences they said it.

The message of the first ambassadors.

The Acts of the Apostles was probably written about fifty years after the departure of Christ. It is the only record we possess of the terms in which his immediate ambassadors presented his Gospel. It is written by one who was personally familiar with the facts, whether or not he had known the Master in the body. In his account he gives a brief but coherent *résumé* of four speeches delivered by St. Peter at Jerusalem, and one at Cæsarea; a conversation of St. Philip; a long speech of St. Stephen; the proceedings and discussions of a general council held at

Jerusalem; and a dozen speeches of St. Paul delivered at various places and to all sorts and conditions of people. In it we have Christ presented by his best qualified interpreters. Here, if anywhere, we ought to be able to discern what the men commissioned by himself to present him actually thought about him. Now, the significant and controlling fact is that not until we reach the very latest speeches of St. Paul do we meet any intimation that his suffering and death had any sacrificial value. It is true that there occur phrases upon which that interpretation has been put, but it is equally plain that the interpretation is a shadow thrown backward from a later time. How they did conceive of him we shall see when we come to study the Eternal Christ. At present we are only concerned to show what they did not maintain. They did not present him as a sacrifice in any sense analogous to the thing for which that word has stood in the religions of the past, or in the prevailing Christian speech of to-day. By the evangelic and catholic theologian their discourses must needs be pronounced lacking in the vital and essential element of the Gospel of Christ. Which is more

Not offered as a ransom.

likely to be right, his Apostles, or a later age?

No expiation in St. James.

The earlier books of the New Testament were written approximately in this order, — James, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, and at a much later and uncertain date 1 Peter and the Epistle to the Hebrews. No book of the New Testament contains so many echoes of the words of Christ as the Epistle of St. James. Yet this is the book which Luther pronounced a very epistle of straw. Had the mind of the ex-Augustinian monk been less preoccupied by Paul and the Bishop of Hippo, he might better have recognized in it the real Christ. In this epistle there is no suggestion of propitiation. It is too near the Master for that.

St. Paul in search of a rationale.

It is to that wonderful man St. Paul that the world owes a coherent rationale of Christ's career. The group of immediate personal friends who survived the Master were neither in the mood, nor were they the kind of men to set down in reasoned form the experience which had transformed their lives. They were still under the spell of his compelling personality, and they were overwhelmed by the new-found hope of immor-

tality brought to them by his appearance after his death. The single burden of their thought and speech was the Resurrection. This was the "good news" which they never tired of telling. It was good news chiefly because it was new. Theretofore, like other men, they had not expected resurrection or the possibility of immortality; now they saw their way to it. The thought made new men of them, and they were confident it would make new men of all who heard it. They preached the "Gospel of the Resurrection." And so did Paul, more forcefully than they all. For a time he preached nothing else. But, after a while, he began to reason upon what lay behind the new-born hope. In his speeches as preserved in the Acts the burden is "immortality brought to light." The same is true of his earlier group of letters. But, later on, as he began to theologize, he began to find in the death of Christ an "expiation" which to his Hebrew mind cleared the way for a resurrection. Little by little the emphasis is transferred from the resurrection of Christ to his crucifixion. Then more and more his crucifixion was identified with the Hebrew and ethnic conception of Sacrifice.

The Gospel of the Resurrection.

Finally the resurrection grows thinner and recedes, and his pages take on a crimson hue. Three interpretations of Christ lie superimposed within his system, biological, legal, sacrificial. But in the end the last one came to dominate. It is taken up in the First Epistle attributed to St. Peter, which is an echo of Paul's latest teaching. It is finally wrought out to its logical completeness in the Epistle to the Hebrews — a letter fitly so entitled.

A psychological necessity.

It is not surprising that this interpretation gained currency. It must not be forgotten that the early Christians, whether Roman, Jew, or Greek, came to the new religion with presuppositions and habits of thought already formed. It is not possible for any man anywhere to disentangle himself at once from his old beliefs while he takes in a new truth. The most he can do is to readjust such of his old convictions as lie in immediate contact with the new one. But underneath these there is the whole contents of his mind. The new truth sinks down among these, and is colored by them while it transforms them. When he attempts to utter the new truth, he can only do it in language and mental imagery which he

already possesses. It requires long time for the new idea to either work over the old ideas to its uses, or to escape from them altogether by building up an entirely new imagery about itself. The truth of Christ could not escape this inevitable condition. He lived and died in Judea, under Roman law, and his life was interpreted by Roman Jews. In being transmitted through their minds it received a coloring which it still retains. The Great Surrender was pictured in Levitical terms. The Light of the world shone out through the stained windows of the temple at Jerusalem. This refraction and discoloration must be allowed for by the world which would see the Sun in his glory. Paul, a Roman citizen as well as a Pharisee of the Pharisees, mingled his pigments in colors borne from Roman Law and Hebrew Sacrifice. One could as well construct a zoology as a gospel in these terms. Christian thought has been bewildered and Christian instinct well-nigh defeated by this logically coherent but empty scheme. Christ's terms are biological; this one's are legal. And Christianity is at bottom a life process and not a commercial transaction.

The Creeds have refused the dogma.

To offset all this, however, is the strange and striking fact that the Christian instinct has in spite of all been true to itself throughout the centuries. The Church has never to this day allowed this interpretation of Christ to dominate her official Creeds. If a truer one be forthcoming, it is open to any Christian man to receive it. Not in any of the early authoritative statements is there an intimation that Christ's death was thought to have propitiatory value. St. Peter is content to construe him as "the Christ of the living God." St. Paul himself, when he sums up his belief for practical uses, describes him as "God manifested in the flesh, justified of the spirit, seen of the messengers, preached among the Gentiles, received up in glory." Ignatius (107 A.D.) says only, "suffered persecution under Pontius Pilate." Irenæus (180 A.D.) says that Christians believe "in the birth from Mary, the resurrection from the dead, and the assumption into heaven." Tertullian (200 A.D.) says, "crucified under Pontius Pilate, and the third day raised again from the dead." Cyprian (250 A.D.) says, "we believe in the forgiveness of sins through the holy Church." Possibly the most significant

of all the early statements of belief is the long and elaborate Creed of Lucian of Antioch. It is important because it is a clear and careful presentation of the fundamental beliefs then held drawn out by a trained and accredited theologian. It dwells at length upon the nature of Christ's person and work. All he says, however, upon the point before us is, "he became man, the go-between for God and Man, the Apostle of our faith, the Prince of Life." Of the two Creeds which alone hold or ever have held catholic authority, one, the Apostle's, says only, "was crucified under Pontius Pilate"; and the other, the Nicene, "who for us men and for our salvation (*σωτηρίαν*, *salutem*, *well-being*) came down from heaven," and passed through his whole career of living, dying, rising.

The consolatory fact is that Christianity has remained Christian in its Creeds even when most pagan in its theology. The savage notion, coeval with the dragons weltering in the prime, of expiation, placation, propitiation, has indeed dominated the undisciplined Christian hosts, but has never found a lodgment within the citadel. There the Real Christ sits serene.

"There have been many attempts to explain the character and personality of Jesus. My object is not to add another to this list, but rather to show that the data do not exist which warrant any one in attempting to classify him with other men as a product of heredity and environment. He seems indeed to have been without father and without mother. Whoever he was, and whatever may be the explanation of his presence, he was an exception among men; not in such a sense as to break the continuity of humanity, but clearly to make it impossible to account for him as we account for heroes and men of genius." — Amory H. Bradford.

"Who and what, then, is the Christ of to-day? First of all, he is the power behind the New Testament. Not, to the modern mind, so much in it as behind it. Just as science finds in all phenomena the manifestation of an unseen, ever present Force, so the investigator to-day, turning over the Christian records, feels himself at every point in contact with the mystery which made them possible. For to whatever extent the inaccurate or the legendary may have crept into the New Testament, there is one thing in which its absolute reliability can never be questioned. It represents with the accuracy of a hair balance the impression made upon its writers by Christ's personality." — J. Brierly.

CHAPTER IV

JESUS CHRIST

Christianity takes its rise, not from the life or the death of Christ, but from his resurrection. It was not until after that event that his personality assumed any world-wide significance. If that had not occurred, his life, assuming it to have been otherwise exactly as recorded, would not have been of importance. It would have been strange, and that is all, and would, no doubt, have been long ago forgotten. It was the man risen from the dead who arrested the world's attention, and it noticed him solely on that account.

Let me say right here, that if any one chooses to take up the position that the alleged fact is so inherently impossible and incredible that to even consider it is folly, I have nothing further to say to him, except something like this: —

A word to the rationalist.

We realize quite as fully as you do that the Resurrection of Christ is contrary to all

human experience, that it is a "miracle" of the first order, that probably no amount of evidence would establish it. But we realize also that human experience is not final. What you and we alike call the "order of nature" is after all no more or less than God's routine way of doing things. It has no dynamic in itself. It can neither cause nor hinder. It is at least possible that a critical point may be reached in the experience of a race where something out of the common ought to happen. If so, we may be very sure that it will happen. The difference between Christianity and secular Science is that the former takes a far wider induction than the latter. All that can be said against the event in question is that it stands isolated and alone among universal phenomena. What then? Cannot a fact be a fact until there shall be in the universe another like it? As to the fact in question, we only contend that there is abundant reason for its being — reason which will be plain enough to any one who will take the trouble to look for it.

A solitary phenomenon may be a real one.

I assume, therefore, the actuality of Jesus' resurrection. What the essential nature of this phenomenon was we will have to inquire

more carefully later on. For the present, it is enough to say that the point in his career at which the world first meets him is after he had died and was alive again. Even his disciples, who had known him intimately before, were obliged to make his acquaintance anew. The place to encounter him is the place which he himself determined. He whom we seek is not the historical personage localized in a Roman province in the time of any Cæsar, but the transcendental personage of infinitely "wide discourse, looking before and after."

The place to encounter Christ.

The cry, "Back to Christ!" which has arisen sporadically in so many places within Christendom during this generation, expresses a real and justifiable longing. It voices the impatient feeling that Christ has in some way become lost in Christianity, that he has been overlaid and hidden within theological definition, thrust out of sight behind ecclesiastical organization, silenced amid the strife of tongues. It is certainly true that something has interposed between Christ and the people. A religion which was meant to be so plain that the wayfaring man might comprehend, has come to be thought of as abstruse, complex, and obscure.

The "Back to Christ" cry.

But while the longing is intelligible and praiseworthy, one is bound to confess that the means taken to gratify it have not satisfied. The truth is, the pilgrims have gone back in quest of the wrong Christ. A wealth of labor, learning, and even genius, have been expended during the last half century in the attempt to reproduce the historical personage and make him real. The scene of his life has been studied and photographed to its minutest detail. The naïve Gospel story has been expanded into "Lives of Christ" by the score. His antecedents have been traced in Jewish heredity. His dress, food, manners, speech, surroundings, have been reconstructed with infinite devotion, and no doubt with substantial accuracy. More information about the human life of Christ is taught every day in mission Sunday-schools than Athanasius, or possibly Paul, possessed. But when all is done, the earnest man is not much less helpless and bewildered amid these accessories than was his ancestor amid fine-spun theologies. He cannot see the forest for the trees.

Futility of attempt to reproduce the scenery.

The life of Jesus does become of absorbing interest and prime importance, but only in its proper order. Not until the world's

interest was engaged with the risen Christ did it even try to remember, much less record, the story of his life. It was the news of the resurrection which arrested attention. The belief in it has, in sober verity, wrought the most momentous result within human history. It transformed man's estimate of himself and of God. The fact was the essential content of the Apostles' evangel. Their burden was not atonement, or redemption, or heaven, or hell, but the announcement of the possibility of continued existence for the individual man as a consequence of the event which they heralded. Men who could comprehend their "good news" welcomed it with the same kind of awed enthusiasm as would one to-day who should have offered to him a method whereby he could add fifty, a hundred, a thousand years to his natural life. Their argument was that Jesus had made an experiment with human living, and had demonstrated in his own person that death need not defeat life, and also that he had become a kind of first-fruits of an immortal harvest which might be abundant if men so chose. It is no doubt quite impossible for us to picture with what eagerness this message was hailed, or how overwhelm-

The Gospel of prolonged existence.

ingly it took possession of the minds and imaginations of men who before had no expectation of future life of any kind. It is no longer news to us. The original appeal of the Gospel was to the supreme aspiration of all sentient beings, the "lust of living." It is little wonder that the first title ascribed to him was the "Lord and Giver of Life." And it is as little wonder that that appeal was so immeasurably more successful than the sordid one to the fear of damnation which has been made for now these many centuries!

Our first introduction, both in the order of thought and the order of history, is to the Risen Christ. But this having been made, the inquiries spring up, — What is he? and what does he signify?

First disciples made no analysis.

The first converts apparently made little or no effort to estimate his nature. They were content to take the Gospel as preached. They believed that if they lived according to the "Way" announced, they would, like him, survive their own deaths. Indeed, it may fairly be said that the working formula of Christianity has always been the same, with the modification that "eternal happiness" has been substituted for "eter-

nal living." But the common notion now current that men are naturally immortal in any case, and that Christ's function is only to affect the pleasurableness of the next life, was unknown among them. They were convinced that by his Way only, could they outlast death, and that by any other way they would perish out of being. The potency of this belief to affect their conduct is apparent. The steadfastness of the early Christians in the face of obloquy, persecution, and torture has long been a gratuitous puzzle to historians. Of all the ingenious explanations, marshalled by Gibbon and his like, for the marvellous spread of the Gospel in the first two centuries, this sufficient one is about the only one omitted. One may believe that they were mistaken in their conviction, but wherever one did hold it, it rendered him proof against all assault. For what signified a few days' hunger, or a few hours on the cross, or a few moments in the fangs of the lions, so long as endurance meant endless existence, and surrender meant falling back into a few years longer life at best, with annihilation at the end of it? Human life is not at any time so well worth the living, that one could be easily

Christians and persecution.

frightened back upon it when he had the chance to exchange it for one which he believed to be far better, and which could not well be worse.

Precisely in what manner they thought continued being to be bound up with his Way they do not seem to have inquired. The scanty allusions to the movement in secular history make it plain that the outside world looked upon it as a pitiful delusion. Alternately they admired the Christians' fortitude and were incensed at their stubbornness. Meanwhile, the belief spread, and all weapons against it were impotent. It was not until from forty to sixty years after Jesus' disappearance that any rationale of this new life was attempted.

St. Paul and the new hope.

Then, first of all, St. Paul undertakes the task. He explains, however, in terms which are most difficult to construe. Never was a more exasperating expounder than he. He passes from scientific precision to vivid metaphor, and from that to emotional rhapsody, and round again through the same circle with such swiftness and unexpectedness, that one is hard put to it to follow. His controlling formulæ are something like these: the Christian "is in Christ" or

"Christ is in him"; or both "are bound up together in his dying"; or "his life is hid with Christ in God"; or "Christ is in him, the hope of glory"; and such like. Strictly speaking it is not a rationale of the phenomena at all, but infinite variations upon the theme that Christ has, by his steadfast persistence in his Way, attained to the resurrection from the dead, and that any other through the same Way may reach the same goal.

It is quite plain, however, that the matter could not remain in that shape. Human nature always craves for the reasons of things. The Church was now numerous and widespread. But it was composed almost entirely of people who knew of Jesus only at second hand. The spell of his immediate presence had lifted. The people must needs ask, Who and what is this person into whose hands we have committed our very existence? It is patent that the Gospels were written in answer to this demand. Their very terms make this plain. What more natural than that these men who had understanding of all these things from the beginning should tell their story?

Why the Gospels were written.

To see the Christ of the Gospels it is not needful to inquire minutely into their date or authorship, or about their accuracy in details. These are questions for scholarship, and in their place important. But the main thing has been settled long ago. Everybody admits that they are memorabilia of Jesus, preserved by his contemporaries and sympathetic friends. If their portrait of him does not show up in bold outlines, we may lay it aside rather than attempt with lenses to construct a picture from confused lines. We may also, if we choose, disregard for the present the stories of the Infancy. All his disciples made his acquaintance first as a full grown man. Their opinion of him was formed before they thought to inquire concerning his birth and parentage.

No biographers ever kept themselves so completely out of sight, as the writers of the first three Gospels. Nothing whatever is known certainly about them. Mark, by his name and his general attitude, suggests that he was a Roman. Matthew's Gospel is certainly from the recollections of a Jew. It appears incidentally that Luke was a physician. This is practically all the in-

formation concerning themselves that they have permitted to transpire. Their motive was a single one, to set down with the utmost accuracy all that they could remember or could certainly ascertain of the words, actions, and movements of their Master. The writer of the Fourth Gospel subordinated this to another motive which we will examine later.

The Gospel drama.

Here, then, in the Synoptic Gospels, we have the story as it was told at the demand of a people who already accepted and lived by the fact of the Resurrection. Without that belief it would not have been written, and without that belief brought to it, it would have been at once incredible and unintelligible. All four Gospels really begin the story at the same point. They date its commencement from the time of a religious revival, which had place in Palestine in the fifteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius, while Pontius Pilate was Procurator of Judea, Annas and Caiaphas being High Priests at Jerusalem. The stage was held by the stern and picturesque prophet, John the "Baptizer." Then a Jewish carpenter steps to the centre, and John makes his exit. The biographers thereafter confine themselves to

his movements. This is the original story, and in Mark it stands thus. But in each of the other Gospels the drama is prefaced by a different prologue. By Matthew the genealogy of the central character from Abraham down is hung up against the scenes, together with an account of his birth and parentage. By Luke a different genealogy is posted, along with a variant story of the Infancy. John prefixes a divine chorus, after the manner of the Greek tragedies. But from that point the drama of Jesus' life proceeds. When we study it the problem may be stated thus: —

Disciples did not know clearly what he was.

What did he conceive himself to be? What did he conceive himself to be doing? What did his friends believe him to be? Let us take the last inquiry first. It is plain that before they wrote the first word they held him to be a man in some way apart from common humanity. In this opinion the people for whom they wrote shared. But just what they held him to be is not plain. The strong impression is made that they did not know. That dogmatic certitude, that assumption that everything could be exhaustively stated, which marks and mars the later Christologies, is altogether

absent from the New Testament. We may say indeed that confident assertiveness is always in inverse proportion to the felt nearness of divine things. One can define God the more confidently the farther away from him he is. A certain tender hesitation, a reverent doubtfulness, if one may use the phrase, marks the attitude of the disciples. That feeling is itself, perhaps, the best indication of what they thought of him. Two things manifestly impressed them chiefly — the marvellous spiritual illumination of his speech, and the marvellous power he showed in dealing with the forces of Nature. The first of these is but illy defined as "sinlessness." Faultlessness is but a tame and negative quality, and they make but little of it. They represent him as not only impeccably good, but dynamically good. The wisdom which they remembered in him was not at all the wisdom of the sage or the philosopher, but that deeper wisdom to which the human heart responds. To this end they preserve his parables, his sermon on the mountain, the profound and tender table talk of the last evening they were with him, his answers to inquirers, and his replies to challengers.

No wonder-worker.

They recount the instances of his healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, walking on the water, cleansing the leprous, stilling the storm, reading the secret thought of the living, and bringing the souls back to the dead. The surprising thing is that they were not surprised. It seemed all natural and in keeping for such a person to do such things. They make no vaunt of them or of him for their sakes. They are frank, on the contrary, to record that he thought of those powers but slightly, never used them to his own advantage, used them at all reluctantly, and always held them subordinate to his main purpose. Nothing could be presented more unlike the vulgar wonder-worker, an Abognotus or a Cagliostro. To them he was plainly not a wonder-worker, but a person from whom on other accounts one might expect marvels. The miracles and mighty works do not encumber the narrative nor interrupt it. They are of the substance of it and render it coherent. To the biographers he was at least superhuman. But when they were challenged by him, as they were more than once, to speak out what they thought of him, they hesitated. Either they were not certain, or they had

no terms in which to phrase it. Most of them were content to say that he was a "prophet."

Now a prophet was a character with whose idea they were at home. He was a man who, in addition to his qualities as a man, possessed certain other endowments in virtue of which he was able, within limits, to produce phenomena impossible to other men. For a while this seemed to be a formula sufficient for the case; but before long it was seen to be so manifestly inadequate that it was abandoned. A few thought of him as "that Prophet," *i.e.* the legendary seer and wonder-worker of tradition and religious folk-lore who was gifted of God above his fellows. But this notion gained little currency. The truth was it fitted him so illy that it could not cling. There was indeed a character extant which would describe him, but for a long time they hesitated to use it. It was that of the Jewish "Messiah." That was the title of an ideal personage held by the Jews in supremest reverence, but whose nature and qualities were most vague and confused. It is not possible to this day to find out with certainty what the Jew means or meant by

Not a prophet.

the Messiah. Rabbi gainsays rabbi, and historian disagrees with historian. One thing can be said, however, about every presentation of the character. He was conceived to be a person higher than man and lower than God. He possessed some of the attributes of both and not all of either, and had immediate relations with both. It is not surprising, therefore, that this title was fixed upon Jesus, or that it is the name by which, in its Greek form, the "Christ," he is known to this day. It satisfied better than any other term could the immediate craving for a definition. For that purpose it is indeed inadequate, but it was the highest and truest available. Nor is damage wrought by its use save when ill-informed piety strives to shrink the Son of God within the compass of a Hebrew conception. This, so far as the biographies serve, is the highest point reached by the three first Gospels in their interpretation of Christ. He was a "prophet"; or he was "Elijah"; or he was the "Messiah"; and beyond this they did not go.

The perplexing term "Messiah."

It is fitting now to ask, What did Jesus regard himself to be doing? No one reading the Gospels can miss seeing that he

regarded himself as one who had a definite and distinct purpose to accomplish. There is no feeling about and waiting upon circumstances. When a mere lad, he expressed surprise that his parents did not know that he "must be about his Father's business." When near the end of his career, and tired, he broke out with the exclamation, "I came to kindle a fire upon the earth; how I would that it were already kindled!" What, then, was the task which he conceived to be distinctively his own? Whatever it was, it may go without saying, he believed that if he did not accomplish it, it must remain forever undone.

There are two paths generally open to the great and sympathetic soul touched by the world's wrong. One is to teach righteousness, the other is to organize righteousness; to be either a preacher or a reformer. Jesus chose neither. He added little or nothing to the world's stock of theoretical morality. Probably all of his noblest sayings may be matched from Socrates or Moses, from Seneca or Guatama. The great company of preachers has served the world well, but Jesus is not among them. No more did he conceive his task to be to

His small contribution to Morals.

reform society. God knows, the social, political, and economic order amidst which he lived was rotten enough. It was a drunken, lustful, cruel, and unjust world. The field for a reformer was ripe to the harvest. There were laborers ready — not many, but very willing. A crusade might have been organized against the actual wrongs, evils, and oppressions of life. Had he put himself at the head of it, with his unparalleled powers, inspired it with his indomitable courage, inflamed it with his divine enthusiasm, one might think it would have swept out west and east from Galilee and cleansed the world. Indeed, the thought did come to him, and tempted him mightily. All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them lay before him. But he deliberately turned away from that path. What then? If his *metier* was neither to teach men goodness nor to change their condition, what was it?

Not a reformer.

Two words dominate all his speech, — "Life" and "Death." With these two phenomena, which are really one, he concerned himself entirely. His problem was, What can be done with the individual human existence? Can it be extended beyond the term which we call natural? And

if so, how? The eternal absurdity is that men die. The higher the individual rises in the scale of being, the more he revolts from the necessity. It puzzles his understanding. It stultifies his consciousness. What he really shrinks from is, not the act of dying nor the fear of anything beyond, but the instinctive horror of being dead, —

The absurdity of dying.

> "That sense of ruin which is worse than pain,
> That masterful negation and collapse
> Of all that makes me man; as though I bent
> Over the dizzy brink
> Of some sheer, infinite descent,
> Or worse, as though
> Down, down, forever I was falling through
> The solid framework of created things,
> And needs must sink
> Into the vast abyss!"

This inescapable horror is the unique experience of man. He can disguise it, accept it, jest at it, forget it, damn it, according to his mood, but it is, after all, the determining force in his action. It increases just in proportion as his nature climbs and expands. The brute knows it not. The brutelike man is touched by it little, if at all. But, in measure as the individual consciousness of being deepens and expands and entangles itself with ever extending

relationships, it is the more oppressed by this brutal surd.

Christ and self preservation.

To this primal need of humanity Jesus addresses himself. Whatever he accomplished was accomplished here. His problem and his task were biological. But he takes it up at the point where the human biologist lays it down. Is the individual human life composed of such stuff, or does it contain within it such qualities, or can it be moulded to such potencies that it can break through the barrier called Death? This is the question he asked; and the answer is Christianity, and nothing else is. At this point a strenuous and sustained effort is demanded to empty our thought of some persistent misconceptions. It is, indeed, most difficult for us at this day to attach the same meanings that he did to the words which he used. In religious phraseology, the antitheses "living and dying," "surviving and perishing," "salvation and destruction," have been for so long a time used in secondary and metaphorical senses that it is hard to realize that in his mouth they had their plain and literal significance. He concerns himself with the phenomena of the personal life. His theme

was, not the happiness or the misery of two contrasted kinds of future existence, but existence itself. Can a man in any wise overcome death, and if so, how? Of course, such an inquiry must lead one at times to a point where the quality of the new existence comes into view, but this never engages his attention long, and is always subordinated to the main theme.

He pronounces at the outset that the thing is possible, but difficult. He introduces it under the category of a "Kingdom." But the moment that word is pronounced, we have to be on our guard lest we miss its meaning. He uses the term habitually in its biological and not its political sense. In other connections we are familiar with that use. We speak of the Mineral "Kingdom," the Vegetable "Kingdom," the Animal "Kingdom." In no other sense does he use the word for his New Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a scientific Classification. Had naturalists and scientific men instead of metaphysicians and jurists formulated Christian theology, the world would have been spared an incalculable confusion. For, in very truth, it is the naturalist's legitimate field. But ages ago the truth of Christ

Christ's biological Kingdom.

was interpreted in terms of law instead of biology. The result has been that the very words of the Master have had fixed upon them an unnatural meaning from which it will be long before they recover. But his language is more intelligible to-day than it has been at any time in the past. In the great cycle of human thought, modern Science has brought into common use the mental forms into which his words fit.

But there the words stand, and they are plain enough to him who scans them with an open mind. His Gospel is the "Gospel of the Kingdom"; that is, the new Order of existence, the "New Man." Those who find their way into the New Kingdom live because life is the law of that Kingdom; those who fail or neglect to do so much are left where they belong, under the old, brutal necessity of perishing. He points out what the condition of entrance into the New Kingdom is. It is by transformation — transmutation rather — of the life which the individual shares with the form next below. "Except ye be born again ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." This "being born again" is, to his view, not so much a metaphor as a scientific statement. Birth

Entrance is, as to all kingdoms, by being born.

is a curious thing; it is an epoch in the progress of an individual life. It is not the beginning of it. The subject of it has reached the end of a stage of development before he can be born. Birth is only the entrance upon a new phase. Jesus does not present the new birth as the beginning of a soul, but as a radical change in its relationships. It cannot be "born again" until it has been born once. Nor does birth guarantee the continuance in life of the thing born; it only gives it opportunity. His dictum is that there is a Way whereby the natural life of an individual human creature can be so modified as to become endowed with an immortal quality. The new creatures thus produced — their origin, their phenomena, their laws, their fortunes — he includes in a New Kingdom. He points out that the entrance into this New Kingdom, as might be expected, differs in essential features from that into the kingdom next below. It is difficult to achieve, and its pain is for the creature being born, and not for that from which it springs. In this Kingdom the pangs of parturition are borne by the child and not the parent. The gate is strait and the path narrow that leadeth into life,

The phenomena of birth.

and relatively few find it. He affirms that the purpose of his presence has to do with this process, that men might have life — life more abounding and persistent than they now experience.

Nor does he leave any doubt as to the means by which it is to be won. It comes by knowledge, but by knowledge of a specific kind. "This is eternal life, to know God. He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath eternal life, and shall escape the crisis which awaits other men, for he is passed from death into life."

Life is correspondence with environment.

Life at any stage of being is dependent upon knowing the realities amid which it is set. Neither brute nor man can survive except as he knows his surroundings. Ignorance is suicide. It is a threadbare dictum of the great Synthetic Philosopher that "life is conditioned upon adaptation to environment." Eternal life is conditioned upon the discovery of the environing God. This is the open secret of Christ. Eternal life is a stage of evolution, difficult, but possible. The individual is mortal; but he may reach to immortality for himself, and presumably for his offspring, if he follow the law for that case made and provided. This process he calls the Way of Life.

To exhibit the proof of all this would be to quote substantially the larger part of the New Testament. It is sufficient to warrant the confident assertion that this conception dominates and coördinates his whole teaching. It all revolves about the new life of the individual man. It widens out into the thought of a society composed of such twice-born souls. It contemplates the action and interaction between such a society and the natural world. It anticipates the ultimate dominion of such a society, and the ultimate decay of all things and persons as cannot be wrought over to its uses. It is the *Novum Organon* for the universe of Man. All his sayings, arguments, parables, aphorisms, metaphors, are dominated by this controlling principle. His imagery is drawn almost exclusively from the processes and phenomena of life. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have æonian life." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised, therefore, when I say unto you that except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven." The place of every

The extended existence of the individual.

creature in the scale of being is determined by its procedure. "For every plant is classified by the fruit it bears. Men do not gather figs from the acanthus nor grapes from brambles. A good plant cannot produce bad fruit, nor a bad plant good fruit. But every plant which bringeth not forth good fruit is cut to pieces and thrown into the fire." The spiritual life follows the natural both in order and method. "For as the Father quickeneth dead matter into living form, so the Son quickeneth whom he will." "He that hearkeneth unto my word and hath confidence in him that sent me, hath æonian life in himself, and moves not to destruction, but hath passed from the dead into the living." "I declare unto you that if a man keep my saying he shall never see death." "Leave the dead to bury their dead and come follow me." His own conception of his mission is unmistakable. It was to open up the Kingdom of life to the individual fit to enter into it. His teaching was the theory; his life was the demonstration.

Illustrations from vital phenomena.

We must now face the question, How does he say that the individual being of this new Order is produced? It is a prob-

lem analogous to that of the origin of life, the origin of Species, the origin of Man. It is the final biological problem to be solved on this earth, but its solution belongs on this earth. What is the origin of the New Man, the creature who is classified in a new Order, viz. the Kingdom of God? The world was never so ready to comprehend Christ's answer as it is now. One might say reverently that Jesus was the first Evolutionist, if it were not more true to say that God is that. Maybe we shall find that it is the same thing. Let us bear in mind that the question before us is not at this stage a "theological" one at all. It is the account of the origin and existence of the highest form of life extant. The only difference arises from the fact that the study of this form leads its student toward the future, and not back toward the past. "For it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall be manifest we shall be like him." It is the stage of evolutionary progress at which the highest extant being now is. For the last term in the ascending series is not Man, but the New Man. Let me urge once more that this language is not metaphoric, but precise.

The origin of the New Man.

One may deny its truth if he will. Maybe it would be less unfortunate to have Christ's truth denied outright than to have its meaning evaporated into pietistic tropes and figures. It is not surprising that that has been done. For if his revelation be taken for the face of it, it becomes, verily, a two-edged sword, piercing the joints and marrow of human life. Little wonder he declared that his way is narrow and his gate strait. It has proved so. It is easier to bedeck the gate with garlands and sit down outside than to struggle within.

The instinct of self-preservation.

He deals with the stern realities of things. The imperious instinct of the individual is his lust of living; his besetting defeat is that he must die. The Gospel of Christ is essentially the exhibition of a way to turn defeat into victory. He exemplifies this way in terms drawn from living. It is now a commonplace of knowledge that each form of living thing arises out of the form next below it. From the primordial slime life is built upward, each higher form being the scaffolding to support a farther advance, until is reached the final product which we call Man. But evolution at every stage demands fit material with which to work.

Jesus finds the material for the New Man in the nature of that one which now is. His estimate of the quality of human nature is shown by the use to which he puts it. He conceives of it not as "fallen," but as undeveloped. The contempt with which a certain theology has treated human nature is absolutely opposed to his fundamental principle.

The Son of Man.

He begins by calling himself the "Son of Man." For what purpose could he use that phrase other than to identify himself absolutely with human nature? His emphasis here was not superfluous, as time has shown. His project was to put human nature, in his own person, to the *experimentum crucis.* He was exploiting the capabilities of man to the uttermost, and it must be made clear that the experiment was being made with human nature in its actuality.

> "For the man most man works best for man,
> Like God at Nazareth."

The title which he assumed for himself cannot be regarded as a fanciful one, nor was it one by which he expressed his affectionate sympathy with man's mortal condition. It was because the force of his experiment

with human living would be broken if it failed to show itself a really human experiment. He called himself the Son of Man because he wished no mistake to be made about the matter. If his Way should prove successful for himself and reach its goal, it must be made plain that the path was open for any man to follow after him. That would be impossible unless it were in the deepest sense natural.

His experiment made with human nature.

With this principle in mind we are prepared to follow the career of the Son of Man understandingly. We encounter him first as a man among men, a man who lived at a certain place, at a certain date, a man with senses, faculties, emotions, as other men, a man who had been a babe, a youth, a young man, and had grown in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. In the full possession of his human faculties, sanely, soberly, deliberately, he chose the Way of Life which he believed would save his life from ultimate defeat by death, and would also lay open a path accessible anywhere to mortal feet. He chose that path not arbitrarily, but because it is the one to which the ideal of humanity pointed. He counted the cost, and paid it because it was worth

it. The cost was very great, but the compensation was immeasurable. It consisted, essentially, in opening wide the side of human nature which looks toward God and good, and resolutely closing the side which gives toward selfishness and sin. This kind of life could only be lived, in the nature of the case, in the midst of what we call circumstances. For a human life consists not alone of actions, but of reactions as well. A holy life cannot be lived apart. "The stern but bracing discipline of living" is defeated unless the soul be exposed to the facts of life.

His task was to live.

His career was not that of a Teacher, expounding truth, of a Physician, expounding the laws of health, of a Philanthropist, alleviating the ills of life. His goal was to be reached, if at all, simply by living. Some of the onlookers voted him a madman, some an impostor, some a fanatic, some a prophet, and some said he was possessed of a devil. Nearly all were offended, and little wonder. If his way was right, their way was wrong. His mere presence irritated, disturbed the world's complacency, stultified the world's wisdom, jeopardized the world's arrangements. Finally he was put out of the way

by practically unanimous consent on the ground that he was too disagreeable to be allowed to live. He was not surprised, for he said himself that his way would not reveal itself to the wise and prudent, but unto babes. Those who had eyes could see. They who see that the path to life lies not through power but goodness, they who have the heart of a little child, are the heirs with him of his Kingdom. As for the others, he assures them with a fine pleasantry that "they have their reward." They get what they work for, so all equities are satisfied. They choose rather to exploit the stage of being where they now are than move on. They make life fat and full and pleasant, and he does not gainsay them. He only reminds them that *if* they wish eternal life they must trade something of this life to purchase it withal. Anthropithecus must renounce the freedom of the forest to become primeval man; "Adam" in turn must renounce Eden as the price of knowing good and evil; and the children of Adam can enter the gate of the New Kingdom only without their accumulations.

Each stage upward leaves behind the goods of the preceding one.

Only one thing could vindicate the choice of Jesus; that was to pass alive through

death. But emerging thus triumphant, he claims it to be a vindication of potential humanity. It also is compassed within the career of the Son of Man, who "must be delivered into the hands of cruel men, and be crucified, and rise again." He did not pass out of the category of humanity even in his ultimate experience.

Jesus vindicated by resurrection.

The fleeting and perplexing glimpses of his transmortem life are few, and such as they are do not come within the forms of thought and speech which pertain to the present stage of human existence. We have no pictures of the imagination to conceive, or words to frame them in. But the record, meagre and conflicting as it is, shows at least this much — that he was still a man. The stream of his self-consciousness was not interrupted. He could still say, "remember." And memory is the chain which binds into one the successive moments of human personality. The whole scheme is presented as one continuous human life, the same life throughout, the babe, the man, the Master, the accused, the convict, the crucified, the dead, the living.

His transmortem phase.

One may dismiss it all as incredible, but he must admit its consistency. Its effect

was to "bring immortality to light." An unsuspected potentiality of human nature exhibited itself in the Son of Man. Once seen, it became plain enough. It was the perfect and symmetrical exhibition of a type of humanity which has, belike, been sporadically in the earth, lo, these many æons. The just, who in all ages have lived by faith, are, in this new light, seen to have possessed a more persistent and prepotent being than even they were aware. But since the Light of the World has shone in this dark place men need no longer grope or feel with hesitating fingers for some path by which to elude the ancient Destroyer, for "death is swallowed up in victory" by the Son of Man.

"Conjecture of the worker by the work;
Is there strength there? Enough; intelligence?
Ample; but goodness in a like degree?
Not to the human eye in the present state,
An isocele deficient in the base.
What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God
But just the instance which this tale supplies
Of love without a limit? So is strength,
So is intelligence; let love be so,
Unlimited in its self-sacrifice,
Then is the tale true, and God shows complete.
Beyond the tale, I reach into the dark,
Feel what I cannot see, and still faith stands."

— Browning, "The Ring and the Book."

CHAPTER V

THE DIVINE CHRIST

THERE is something strangely repellent in the conventional formularies which express the Christian doctrine of the Divinity of Christ. The so-called Athanasian Creed may properly be taken for an example. It is true that it has never been officially accepted by the Church, but it may be said that it is the habit of orthodoxy to esteem it the most complete statement of the doctrine extant. If the Christian multitude refuse to receive it officially it is "on account of the hardness of their hearts."

The too great precision of orthodoxy.

"For the right faith is that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;

"God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before all worlds; and Man, of the substance of his Mother, born in the world;

"Perfect God, and perfect Man; of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting;

"Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood.

"Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two but one Christ;

"One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by taking the manhood into God;

"One altogether; not by confusion of substance; but by unity of person.

"For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ."

The secret of this repulsion is not hard to discover. It is not because the propositions are not true. No doubt they are true enough. But lying behind them one feels a temper from which he will turn away if he can. If he has just been reading the Gospels, and comes from under their gracious spell to confront this simulacrum, he feels as one would to find himself unexpectedly in a room where a group of surgeons were dissecting the body of a dear friend whom he had seen alive the hour before. It deals with a dead Christ. The spirit which finds satisfaction in such work is akin to that which would "peep and botanize upon a mother's grave." It is as though the lover should make an inventory of his mistress's charms, as though one inscribed a Bertillon description for an epitaph upon a brother's tomb. It offends by its sheer cold-blooded

inquisitiveness. Nor is that all. One's intelligence shares in the offence to his reverence. For the terms of the formulary are not really presentable before the understanding. The mind which attempts to grasp them is eluded and irritated. One moment it sees, and the next moment it does not see. Opposed and incompatible concepts are presented alternately and simultaneously, until thought, beaten back and forth like a shuttlecock, drops exhausted. The soul is offered an analysis when it asks a synthesis, a metaphysical formula when it demands a living Person. The Christological literature of the Church is of vast extent, and ranges from the most exalted devotion down to the veriest trifling. But one rises from its study with a feeling of depression. He has been seeking the living among the dead; he is not here.

Unintelligible definitions.

The purpose of this writing is something altogether different. I would, if possible, take the reasonable man by the hand and lead him into the Presence. If he find there mystery, and reality passing understanding, it is needful for him to recognize in it the same kind of mystery which he must always confront when he explores the arcana of

False and true mystery.

Nature or strives to know God. Men have no quarrel with mystery as such. They will pay little heed to Mr. Spencer when he warns them away from God as trespassers upon the grounds of the Unknowable. As little will they mind Mr. Balfour's assurance that they cannot know "things in themselves." The naturalist and the psychologist, as well as the man of affairs and the woman who loves, have learned long ago that every advancing step of knowledge or experience brings them into the presence of ever widening mystery. But what they rightly demand is to know that the mysterious things are real things and not figments. Not otherwise may the Eternal Christ be approached.

The exhibition of Divine Humanity.

We have seen that one moiety of Christ's career was to exhibit the whole capacity of Humanity. To this end he was born and passed through the whole orbit of movement of a man, from the womb, through growth, through temptation, through death, through hell, into the new Humanity. The other half was to exhibit God. But according to him, the two processes coalesced and became essentially one. Whoever sees man in his completeness finds in him something divine;

whoever sees God finds in him something humane. This *approchment* of God and Man is the note of Christianity. Unless we assume that human nature and divine nature possess a common quality, it is useless to enter the region of religion at all. For only beings of the same kind can hold intercourse. A man can have no commerce with a stone; a fish cannot speak with a bird; only a god can hold converse with God. The Gospels assume this with a strange simplicity. The genealogy in St. Luke places Adam in the direct line of descent between God and Jesus. "Jesus, which was the son of . . . David, which was the son of . . . Abraham, which was the son of . . . Noah, which was the son of . . . Adam, which was the son of God." The *stirps* is the same throughout.

God and man ligated by Love.

The foundation-stones of Christianity are these two, — "God is Love;" and, "Ye are the sons of God." The small extent to which they are believed to be true is amazing. Judging from the everyday speech of men, the very opposite beliefs prevail. God is conceived of as essentially Power; and man a rather contemptible but vain being, in whose fortunes God is not necessarily con-

cerned in any other way than he is with the rest of his creation. Christ's God is his own father, and the father of all his human brethren. It is from this antecedent fact that the Incarnation emerges. It is not in any true sense a reasoned and planned transaction. It is the spontaneous and involuntary act of a parent. "Love finds a way;" and love takes no account of cost. Christ looks upon men not as manikins created by a divine fiat, but as the fruit of God's loins. Their Father's love for them is inescapable by himself. His own content and his own completeness are bound with them. His fatherhood is not one of majesty but of real parentage. There is current a strange reluctance to think or speak of God as enduring pain. He is thought to be fitly conceived only as serene, impassible, unperturbed in his self-centred felicity.

The eternal pain of God.

The God of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is one who has borne the cross in his own heart since before the foundation of the world. Pain is the eternal concomitant of loving. Whosoever loves places himself within the power of the object of his affection. His happiness is no longer in his own keeping. If the loved one suffer, he suffers;

if the love be unrequited, it becomes a torment. Moreover, love is the inevitable product of relationships. In its purest possible form it is the affection of a parent for a child. The higher the nature of the parent the more inextinguishable the love. Among beasts parental affection is of brief duration, and vanishes away. Among men it lasts long, but is not inexpugnable. If the parent be absolutely good, as God, the love will be deathless. No waywardness of the child, no deformity, no folly, and no crime can beat it off. The suggestion that the Parent would slay the child to regain his own peace or to safeguard his own justice, is one so wildly irrational that one can only stand amazed when he confronts it in theologic guise. Suppose the All-Father, by one stern sentence of doom to condemn and execute the rebellious and hateful race of men, what then? Has God no memory? Is the blessed power to forget one of his attributes? And is love not made of the same stuff in all spheres of being? The eternal Father may not execute his children, nor can he unget them. There remains therefore only to win their affection and bring them home. But Love has no power to compel.

God cannot disown his offspring.

This is a place where coercion can only defeat itself. It can only open its arms, entreat, solicit, understand, and wait.

The two parents of the Christ.

Christ defines himself as at once the Son of Man and the Son of God. That is, the Ideal man recognizes both parents, begotten of his Father who is in heaven in the virgin womb of Humanity his mother. He opens his arms to both. We have already looked at the side of his life which binds him to his kinsmen on the Mother's side. How did he conceive of himself as related to his Father?

In the first place he boldly claimed for himself the family likeness. "He that seeth me seeth him that sent me." "He that seeth me seeth the Father." He claimed to have a direct and immediate commission from the Father to do certain things. "I know him; for I am from him, and he hath sent me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always the things which please him. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father." Many a man has been "conscious of a mission" in the world, but no enthusiast uses language like this. Indeed it is but the simple truth to say that his speech does not in any way give the

impression of an enthusiast. There is a certain serene sanity about him which is not easy to define, but which makes itself felt.

Now, if it be true that he held a special commission from God to do a specific thing, when did he receive it, and where, and how? He himself does not say. For the most part he contents himself with asserting the fact. He says that he "came down from heaven"; that he is "doing the work which his Father gave him to finish"; that he "seeks not his own will but the will of him that sent him"; that he "came out from God." He claims to have a delegated power on earth to forgive sins. Once he claimed to be the "lord" of whom David spoke when he said, "Yahveh saith unto my lord, Sit thou on my right hand." And once in a cryptic utterance he seems to assert for himself a pre-existence, — "before Abraham was I am." This is as far as we can go depending upon his own statements. He believed himself to have a special commission from God; he knew his Father's will beyond the possibility of mistake; he came out from the Father; he expected to return again to the Father; and to come again to judge the quick and the dead; and he *acted* as no

From whence is the Christ?

mere man has either the power or the right to act.

"If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."

We may acknowledge that this seems a meagre and unsatisfactory way for a divine personality to show himself withal. "If thou be the Christ, why not tell us plainly?" It would seem to have been so easy for him to exhibit himself in some less questionable shape. But this objection cannot stand against even a very little sober reflection. Why does not God always show himself? Why does he leave men to grope and hesitate, lost in the mazes of the universe? The answer is easy. Revelation is but the obverse of discovery. No truth is ever revealed to an intelligence except as it is discovered. The function of any reality is only to *be;* it is the task of intelligence to *see* it. In the nature of things God, at any time or place or way, can only be found of them that seek.

"'Oh, where is the sea,' the fishes cried,
As they swam the crystal clearness through;
'We've heard from old of the ocean's tide,
And we long to look on the waters blue.
The wise ones speak of an infinite sea;
O who can tell us if such there be?'

"The lark flew up in the morning bright,
And sung and balanced on sunny wings;

And this was its song; 'I see the light;
I look on a world of beautiful things,
But flying and singing everywhere,
In vain have I searched to find the air.'"

The task of the disciples was to see the divinity, being in its presence. Did they see? and what did they see? The most exalted term used by them during his life was, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This definition, if it be a definition, he expressly approved. Now, what did they mean by it? I do not ask, What do the words connote when we use them? but, What did Peter at Cæsarea mean by them? The reply is, He did not know clearly what he meant. It is the language of deep emotion, reverence, adoration. In that mood the mind does not attempt to define. We always imagine Peter falling upon his knees before the Master while he made this impulsive speech. The very form of the declaration shows that he was controlled by emotion and not by thought. The terms used served well enough to express a feeling. And after all, the fact that Christ was able to arouse that feeling is a far better proof of his divine quality than it would have been to extract from his

Divinity of Christ eludes definition.

followers the most scientific definition of himself.

The terms used, "Christ" and "Son of God," were common in Jewish speech. But they were not used with any theological precision. They were simply titles for an exalted personage whose home was "in the heavens." In a way, "Messiah" was to the Jew very much the same thing that "Christ" is to the unthinking multitude among Christians, a high and divine being, somewhere between God and Man, but precisely where they were not clear.

At that stage the Christian conception of Christ stood for thirty years after his disappearance. His first ambassadors had no defined Christology. They were immediately concerned with his resurrection and its practical results. As to the Person who had risen, they presented him under a variety of terms, with the general purport that he was a divinely exalted person, but they did not identify him with God. Six weeks after the Resurrection, Peter, as the delegate of the apostolic band, for the first time preached Christ to the crowd. He introduces him as "a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders

Disciples had but a vague Christology.

which God did by him," as "the Holy One," "the Messiah." A little later, in his next address, he calls him "the Righteous One," "the Prince of Life," "the Servant Jesus whom God anointed," "a Prince and Saviour." Stephen used words of like import. Paul in his great sermon at Athens, spoke only of "Jesus and the Resurrection." It is noteworthy that in that same sermon, when he was arguing with the Greeks about the real nature of God, as contrasted with their idols, he makes no mention of Christ at all. At this point they stood for many years. The fact was they felt no need for any more precise definition of the Christ. He possessed their worship wholly, and they were under a driving enthusiasm. Moreover, Christianity was at first deemed both by its friends and its enemies to be a movement within Judaism. The Christians were still Jews, and they had no thought of becoming anything else. Their aim was to "redeem Israel." They did not realize at all that Christ's relations were with the universal world. For the purpose in hand, the terms in which they presented him were quite sufficient. If they could convince the Hebrews of that much, their task would be done.

Terms of the first evangelists.

How to state the Christ to the pagan world.

But when Christianity was driven to see that Judaism was too narrow for it, and was led to confront the pagan world, the necessity for some more coherent and portable conception of Christ became evident. So long as they preached the "Messiah" to Jews they did not need to define the term; but when they undertook to preach Christ to pagans, the first question which they must hear and answer was, "What is this Christ?" At this point we once again meet St. Paul. We may say that to him we owe the Christ of Christendom. Not, of course, that he created the character, but taking the facts of the case he first saw their meaning and import. Nor need we say that he set forth their whole meaning. He was far too modest himself to claim that. The Incarnation is a fact which belongs to the whole universe of men, and each generation may legitimately be expected to give some needed touch to its interpretation. That much misused phrase, "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," has no application here. The fond notion that the truth concerning Christ was completed and sealed at some uncertain date in the early centuries, is a dream of doctrinaires. The saints themselves with-

out us are not perfect. But St. Paul began the task of presenting Christ to the intelligence. He had hardly died when another man took up the theme and carried it far beyond the point he reached, but so far as he did go, his work in the main stands to-day.

Christ larger than the Messiah.

Paul's first step was to disentangle Christ from the Jewish Messiah. That conception, as we have seen, was both too narrow and too incoherent to fit him. Paul declares that before he knew Christ, while he was a Jew, he did know the Jewish Messiah, "a Christ after the flesh," but "thereafter he knew him no more" (2 Cor. v. 16). He admits, of course, that Christ was that, but he points out that that was the smallest part of what he was. He makes but little of the concrete life of Jesus, in fact he seldom refers to it at all. "With the death of Jesus the former age became extinct. When he bowed his head upon Calvary, the Christ according to the flesh, *i.e.* the Jewish Messiah, died never to live again, and the age of the spiritual Messiah was ushered in. In dying he abdicated the Messiahship of a people and assumed the universal sceptre of mankind." Paul lifted the conception of Christ out of

history into cosmology. He identifies the risen Man with the nature of God.

We need not pause here to estimate the credibility or even the rationality of this conception, but may well remind ourselves and others that it is the one which has been for more than nineteen centuries actually transforming human life. We may well believe that its introduction at a critical point of history saved humanity from perishing from off the face of the earth through sheer moral rottenness. It arrested the attention of a melancholy world, given over to luxury and brutality, and made it consider whether after all human goodness might not have a divine sanction. Since then it has been considering more and more. It is the belief in the Incarnation which in its final output builds asylums for abandoned babes, makes society uneasy at the cry of the oppressed, renders man's labor and woman's virtue worth while, subdues the material world to men's uses, because it believes that man is intrinsically worth doing it for. It is Christianity and not "civilization" which carries Christendom forward. And Christianity is the Eternal Christ.

The effect of the conception in history.

Of all writers who have influenced the

world's thought and life Paul is perhaps the most difficult to construe. He mingles dialectics, poetry, exhortation, and rhapsody as only untrained genius could do. He nowhere sets out in formal propositions his conception of Christ. But it is not difficult to gather from his undisputed Epistles his main idea. He depicts Christ as "the image and likeness of God"; as the being in whom is reflected "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God"; the "Man from Heaven"; the "life-giving Spirit"; the "One without sin"; the "One sent from God"; as having been concerned with creation itself, "through whom are all things." But he always stops short of identifying him with the eternal God. Indeed in one crucial passage he shows plainly that he conceived him to be still, in the scale of being, separate from and subordinate to God. "I would have you to know that the head of the woman is the man; and the head of every man is Christ; and the head of Christ is God." In substance, he took the Hebrew-Christian "Messiah," broke it up, set free the Christ which they had concluded within it, and set him in the place of supreme honor, over all things in the universe, but beneath God.

St. Paul's Christ.

The Christ of the Fourth Gospel.

Both the authorship and the date of the Fourth Gospel are still in dispute. No one, however, will quarrel with the statement that it was written somewhere between fifty and a hundred years after the resurrection of Christ. Nor does its authorship greatly matter for the purpose in hand, — though personally I find it difficult to feel much weight in the considerations which would deny for it the hand of "that disciple which Jesus loved." In any case the writer had before him the same facts which Paul had, and in addition thereto had Paul's interpretation of the facts. But John, if it be he, takes the facts and lifts them at once into the category of the Divine. At the very beginning of his Gospel he applies a new term to Christ. He calls him the "Word," the "Logos." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." What does he mean? At this point we meet a serious difficulty of a practical kind. The term "Logos," which in the New Testament is rendered "Word," is a term which cannot be expressed in English except by a clumsy and difficult circumlocution. It may be enough to say that the purpose of the writer

was by means of this term to identify Christ with the essence of God. This purpose controls throughout his Gospel. The later conception of two or more persons in the Godhead, and the essential relations of these persons toward each other, does not seem to have been in his mind. It is true that he saw in the very nature of God a "Father" and a "Son," that he saw the Son going into the universe upon an errand of God, and there are intimations that he discerned a third spiritual personality concerned in the transaction, but beyond that he does not go. For any further development of the Doctrine of Christ we must go to the Church and not to the New Testament.[1]

The sum of the whole matter.

And now, what is the substance of it all? What but this, — In the career of Jesus is exhibited in actual experience both the ideal

[1] It seems proper for certain reasons to say that I have stopped in the argument before reaching the Doctrine of the Trinity, and have done so intentionally. I have stopped where the Catholic Creeds stop. I believe that the Doctrine of the Trinity, as it has been held by the sober mind of the Church since the third century, is true, and that it is an adequate philosophy of God so far as the wit of man can devise. But it must be borne in mind that the Doctrine exists for the purpose of making coherent the facts of the Incarnation. The Doctrine must be construed by the facts, and the facts may not be strained to fit the Doctrine.

life and possibility of man; and also all of God which is expressible in terms of humanity. The motive compelling the amazing phenomenon is that God is Love; that he has begotten children; that the children, being children, are wandering with aimless feet and perishing; that the Son, the first-born among many brethren, comes with the Father's benediction to lead them home; that his way leads through pain and death; that in the radiance of his risen life some of the children at least — the Magdalene first of all — recognize him and cry Rabboni, which is to say, Master!

But all this has place in history. However true and real, it is ten thousand miles away in space, and twenty centuries in time. When the Son of Man disappeared he left the disciples staring foolishly into the clouds. To reproduce the Judean scenes however vividly will not bring him back again. If he be really a person who has actual relations with human life, "who shall scale the heavens to bring him down, or descend into the abyss to bring him up from the dead?" In a word, what does Christ mean to the work-aday world? Does he mean anything? Neither science nor philosophy take any

The present situation.

account of him at all. For their purposes he is superfluous. One can conceive the universe fashioned by a Creator, managed by a Creator, and finally destroyed by a Creator, and their philosophy is complete, — provided the Creator be without love. Science may be conceived so exhaustive that no phenomenon is left unclassified, — provided it leave the religious faculty of man out of account. But these two things, God's love and man's yearning, are eternal disturbers of the peace. Is there any place or any person in which these two needs may meet, under the conditions of the universe as they now exist?

The Christ of Theology.

The Christ of Theology is a marvellous construction. No one would even wish to belittle it, or to feel anything but reverence for the devotion and the thought out of which it has been created. But one cannot shut his eyes to the fact that the world has grown indifferent to it. The images under which that Christ is presented to the intelligence have come to appear artificial and unreal. It does not satisfy to be told that he is an eternal High Priest and an eternal Victim forever pleading his pain before an eternal God. The very conception itself has

passed away from among the stock of mental forms with which thought is equipped. Even when the image is vividly realized it presents a mode of action in some far-away sphere. The difficulty is to connect it in any real way with human living. It only maintains for itself a place in human speech by the iteration of its terms in connection with a Sacrament, whose real significance is obscured by the terms. Even so, one never meets it outside this sacramental region. Rightly or wrongly, it does not present a being having actual relations with life.

Royal imagery does not serve us.

Nor do the honorific attributes of a King bring us nearer. "Sitting at the right hand" of a Potentate had a significance for the oriental, with his innate habit of royalty. But for us it is not so. Not that the conception is untrue, it is an image which Jesus used to express himself. No doubt it conveyed to his hearers the impression which he meant it to convey, but it did so because of the preconceptions which they brought to it. But even so, it conveys the idea of an external Monarch and Ruler, constraining history and bending human events to his purposes. That Christ has been and is doing this is plain to one who takes any large view

of the movement of the world. But what we seek to find, if it be possible, is how he is related to the individual life. We ask not to know completely what he is, or how he acts, but how to reach him.

No more true or more profound statement of the truth will be made than that by St. John, — "The Word was with God; the Word was God; the Word was made flesh." The function of the "Word" is to mediate between the self-consciousness of God and the self-consciousness of man. That is only possible by in some way coalescing these two in one self-conscious person. This we believe to have been done in the person of Christ. But, and I speak it reverently, has it stayed done? Was the Incarnation a mere episode in the movement of God and Humanity? Or is it an abiding fact? And if it be the latter, in what region does that reality now function? We here touch that fascinating and perplexing question of the relation of the Risen Christ to the actual universe. It is clear from the record that he, in his "spiritual body," had some point or mode of contact with what we call the physical universe; and also that his psychical part was such as could hold converse

Is the Incarnation a continuing phenomenon?

with the psychical part of men. Do both of these phenomena still obtain? If not, has the Incarnation come to an end? The way is thus opened to say, as I believe with reverence, though with hesitation, what follows.

Unsuspected realities in the physical sphere.

The two most striking and significant achievements of knowledge thus far reached are those two which open at the same time hitherto unsuspected doors into the physical and psychical worlds. The unthinking person is prone to regard such things as Roentgen Rays and Radial Activity to be merely inventions and discoveries, only a little more wonderful in degree than the hundreds which have preceded them. This misapprehends their significance. They are discoveries in a new region. They have compelled a new definition of "flesh." They may compel a new reading of the Incarnation; for that, on one side, is a material phenomenon.

The other is the discovery of what is commonly called the "Subconscious Self." Underlying, or behind the conscious self of each individual is a deeper and unknown self. As Professor James says, "this subconscious self is now a well accredited entity." From it those experiences and

emotions which we call religious well up into consciousness. Their invasions have to do with prayer, conversion, religious experience, as well as a thousand other things in our living. It is no doubt here that the conception takes place which, after gestation, issues in the "new birth." As Professor James again profoundly says, the "religious question is primarily a question of life; of living or not living in the higher union which opens itself to us as a gift."

May it be, therefore, that the real Being toward which the "new born" soul feels is the One whom St. John describes as the Word made Flesh? that no one ever has or ever can see the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son reveals him? that the sacramental notions of being born again, and having the body and the soul preserved by Him to everlasting life, may after all be scientific and not mystical terms? and that "the heavenlies" in which He dwells may not be remote or inaccessible? In a word, is it not possible that the shortest and most accessible path to the glorified Christ may turn out to be through the new-found capacities of physical rather than metaphysical phenomena? Suppose the devout

The pathway to the living Christ.

soul, which has stood gazing vacantly into the heavens, shall turn about and look inward and downward through its subconscious self, and move outward through its own spiritual body, may it not find itself face to face with the Word made Flesh? And in point of fact, is not that the only way by which any soul has ever caught any glimpse of divine realities?

"There is in man the spark of the Divine nature. We know this because we see it in Jesus. But we cannot of ourselves or through our own power grow into full consciousness of the Divine element within us. The spark of Divine fire is too feeble in our spirit. This muddy vesture of decay which doth grossly close us in clings too close and impedes our effort too effectually. Our one and only hope lies in the intensity of the belief that this can be done in spite of the impossibility; that the Divine element in us can overcome the lower nature and assert itself in victory, though we ourselves cannot succeed. The good man is he who has tried hard to achieve even a little progress on the way to goodness; he is made good because he has tried. And the guarantee that all good things are ours lies in that one supreme truth — the Life of Christ."

— Ramsey, "The Education of Christ."

"Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be,
By what distractions he would be possessed,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity;
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally."

— Matthew Arnold.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRISTIAN MAN

Images he does not use.

It is remarkable that the images by which Christianity is usually pictured are just the ones which Jesus never used. He likens the Kingdom of Heaven to many things, but never to a State, a City, or an Army. Its actual phenomena are incongruous with all these things. The most fatal error of all has been in identifying his idea of a "Kingdom" with the phenomena of a State. In its political sense the idea of a Kingdom is very familiar. Its component elements are a definite territory, a sovereign, citizens, terms of naturalization, a code of laws, provision against foreign attack, penalties provided for breach of order. Under this guise the Kingdom of Christ in the world is habitually presented. The wonder is that men have not always realized how utterly inapplicable these conceptions are to the facts of the case.

For a kingdom of that sort must have definite and recognizable frontiers, one must be

Nature of a political State.

able to tell whether he is within it or not; he must be able to tell where it begins and ends. Just in proportion as this conception has controlled the life of the Christian Society, that Society has lost sight of the truth of Christ. The conspicuous example of this policy is that organization calling itself the Catholic Church, and known by others as the Church of Rome. This conception of an empire is its organizing principle. On this account it was actually transformed long ago from a Church to a State. It postulates a territory conterminous with the earth. It places a Vicegerent of God in the throne of the sovereign. It prescribes definite conditions of citizenship. It has a code, with penalties for its infraction. They who are within this kingdom are Christians; they who are outside are not. The system is simple, coherent, intelligible. In the Protestant world the same political conception of a kingdom obtains, but it is rested upon uneasily, and practically is evaded. It prefers to content itself with the figment of a "Church Invisible" rather than to carry its political notion of the kingdom into practice. The Catholic, therefore, has a mistaken answer ready for the question,

What is a Christian? the Protestant has no answer.

The fundamental error is in construing Christ's "Kingdom" in political images. What he deals with is a biological Kingdom, not a political State. When this is recognized, it at once removes the matter into an entirely different region. Conceptions drawn from the realm of governments, laws, statutes, and institutions are irrelevant. At most, they can only be rightly used to illustrate or help out the thought. But they are the metaphors; the biological concepts are the facts, and not the reverse. The problem is one essentially akin to that of the naturalist. It is to identify, examine, describe, and classify a new creature. The final task of the naturalist is always classification. Where does any given form belong in the order of life? In what does it differ from other creatures? If it be true that Christ stands in the centre of a new Order of beings, how are the members of that Kingdom to be recognized? How do they act? What are their habits? In a word, What is a Christian?

Nature of a living Kingdom.

The adjective "Christian" is really one of the most vague and indefinite words in com-

mon use. The definitions of it which have been attempted are as a rule either so confused as to be valueless, or so precise as to be untrue. Is a Christian simply one who is morally "better" than other men? Or is he one who proposes to form his life after the pattern of Jesus? Or is he one who has been admitted to membership in the Organization by the due rite of initiation? Or is he one who has passed through some special phase of emotional experience? Or is he the product of some combination of any or all of these? The answer is, All these definitions are irrelevant. They are like attempts to express a chemical compound in feet and inches, to describe a polyp or a marsupial in musical notation, to measure a mother's sympathy by a qualitative analysis of her tears, or to describe a human child in terms of geometry. The phenomena exist in one realm; the definitions are drawn from another. If, however, we replace the whole matter in the region where Christ's facts move, the perplexity disappears.

What is a Christian?

The practical evil wrought by this confusion is incalculable. Men actually do not know how to set about the matter. Their action in the sphere of religion shows a

How shall one set about to be born again?

strange lack of purpose or plan. In other things they know what they are trying to do; here they are vague, and as a consequence, ineffective. Very many leave it alone altogether on this very account. It is probably the case that religion occupies a far smaller space in the everyday lives of men within Christendom than it does in heathen men's lives. The Moslem or the Hindoo allows to it a large measure of activity. This is not because he is more religious than we, but because religious action is for him more clearly defined. His course of action is clear, and is followed chiefly because it is clear. Among us it is not so. Multitudes of men are held away from Christianity a thousand times more by its illusiveness than by its mystery or its moral exaction. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" is the eternal cry of the earnest soul. But to this eager inquiry there is no answer forthcoming which he sees how to act upon. Jesus' answer seems to have been strangely lost sight of. What that is we shall examine after a little. But in its absence, and no doubt on that account, what we see about us is a curious lack of stability and fixedness of purpose in religious movement.

Confused ideas of Christianity.

It is not at all "inconsistency," that is, lack of correspondence between profession and practice. It is action which is without clear aim, movement which goes nowhere. The practical man either leaves it out of his life, or else he tends continually to move either toward the mechanical legalism of Rome at her worst, or toward practically unethical Revivalism. He rests finally upon a Code, or an Emotion, or he oscillates between the two.

Properties of a Kingdom in Nature.

A "Kingdom" in Nature is a very complex and mysterious thing, but its phenomena are intelligible. Let us take, for example, the "Animal Kingdom." Its frontiers are not discoverable. Between it and the vegetable Kingdom next below there is a debatable land, how extended no man knows. There are a myriad forms of life, as yet too little developed to permit one to say which Kingdom they belong to. The Kingdom contains within its borders forms as widely unlike in manner and appearance as the Amœba and the Man, together with all forms between. The quality which all the forms possess in common is that thing which we call animal life. It contains within it a thousand methods of generation, but the

thing generated is always of the same kind — a living, animal form. Its most highly organized product is Humanity. But within that form also there is immeasurable diversity. It contains individuals hardly distinguishable from the brute beneath it, to the most highly developed individual living. Within this Kingdom there is an eternal onflow and progress. At a certain point the Vertebrate emerges; at another, Marsupials, Mammalia, Primates, Man. While it is evident that each form begins in the ones below it, its origin cannot be traced. It was not; it is. Whenever it is, it becomes identifiable. The Christian *Principia* is that the origins of a still higher type of life lie latent in Humanity; that they develop according to a law of their own; that Christ is organically connected with this process of development; and that the new creature is the Christian. Is it possible, then, to ascertain what is the distinguishing quality of this new creature?

Evolution in Nature.

There is one significant fact which the naturalist has learned in studying the evolution of species. That is, a new form does not take its start from the summit of the form next below. The divergent path which

Origin of the Christian in the man.

issues in a higher being takes its departure at a point away below that place. The line of evolution which culminates in Man, when traced backward, is found to intersect the trunk of the tree of life at a point much below the place from which the Simian branch springs. By analogy, therefore, we must not look for the beginnings of the "new life" at the top of human attainment. It must be sought for among meek and lowly beginnings. We may expect it to be present at a stage where the intelligence is but little developed, where all human powers and faculties are relatively low. "For not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty are chosen, but God hath chosen the foolish and the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are strong." And Jesus announces that "God hath hid these things from the wise and understanding, and hath revealed them unto babes."

Whatever "that manner of life which was also in Jesus Christ" may prove to be, we may expect to find it compatible with a low order of intellectual and moral development. To identify the "Christian" we must not look for a higher life than that which Humanity has already exhibited, but for a

A new kind of being.

different type of life. The disciples of Christ were not "better" men than their contemporaries: they had become a different kind of men. They probably compared but illy with Seneca or Marcus Aurelius or the "sweet Gallio." They were men of limited intelligence and faulty character. This feature is strikingly true of Christianity so far as its history is contained within the New Testament. St. Paul addresses the Christians as "saints," "new creatures," and in the same breath chides them for their flagrant moral offences. He deplores that they are but new-born babes in the new Order, and can only be fed with milk and not strong meat. All that the new life demands is a human life developed far enough to make its beginning possible.

The New Life attaches itself to human nature at the point where the moral sense emerges into self-consciousness. In its essence it is *un-self-ishness.* On its theoretical side it is not likely to be more adequately stated than has been done by Schopenhauer. In the natural man the soul is divided between the "Will to Live," and the "Will to Love." Led by the one the individual strives to conquer the universe to its own ends. It

The Will to Live; and the Will to Love.

looks toward itself, and must ultimately be defeated and perish, because the universe is hostile to it, and is too strong for it. Led by the other, it emerges from itself, becomes at home in the universe, and akin to God. The first self-consciousness of this kinship is the "new birth." Like all new-born things it is feeble and its motions are reflexive rather than voluntary, but it has been born. It feels outward with hesitating fingers, not to clutch the universe, but to caress it. But, it will be asked, Is not this true of every man? I reply, yes and no. Every man does have the capacity to love, to love furiously, but his love is the lust to possess and enjoy. It is the higher and rarer man who loves without reference to self. If it be asked, Does any man do that? I answer, Yes, the New Man does, and this is the test by which he is identified. The classic statement of the truth is in the First Epistle of St. John, which is hereby commended to the scientific man. No more profound utterance is extant in philosophy or biology: —

St. John's classic definition.

"The Word of life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness unto you the eternal life which was with the Father and

was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us whose fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. A new commandment write I unto you, which is no new commandment, that ye love one another. For love is of God, and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us the eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the 'Son' hath the life; he that hath not the 'Son' hath not the life. These things have I written unto you that ye might know that ye have the eternal life."

The "Christian," then, is the human being who is recognized by his peculiar habit, viz. his will to live being subordinated to his will to love. This sets him in a new relation to both the spiritual and the physical universe.

Christians before Christ.

But if this be the state of the case, were there not Christians long before Christ, and in regions where no word of him has ever reached? Undoubtedly. The place held by Christ in the New Order is not the

beginning of a series, but the centre of a circle. From Jerusalem he moves outward in every direction, not only in space but in time as well. If life be correlated organically with the Son of Man whom we adore, it must be in some way which is superior to times and dates, and which is not contingent upon human missionaries. We are not at liberty to present him as eternal, and at the same time fixed within history and geography. The New Man must have appeared in the upward progress of humanity long before God's experiment with human living in the time of Tiberius Cæsar. We may not allow the need of theological coherence to shut the doors of the Kingdom against "Noah, Daniel, and Job," or their kind of any kin. The "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" is not the God of the dead, but of the living. The Christian contention is that whoever, anywhere, or at any time, has attained to a spiritual life which manifests these qualities, has attained unto that life whose law is exposed and exemplified by him "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is called."

There is another and a perplexing aspect of our theme which we may not evade.

What of the feeble and rudimentary forms?

The New Man, whom we have been trying to identify and describe, exists actually in such rudimentary and incomplete shape, and passes out of this life so far from complete. "Some are sick and weakly among us, and some are asleep." What of these? What of the undeveloped child, the feeble-minded and the feeble-souled, that great multitude who, so far as we can see, have been born from above, have the "will to love," but have been so let and hindered in the race set before them that they must needs pass on, if they pass at all, into the next phase, like Richard the hunchback complained he had been thrust into this, "scarce half made up"? Frankly speaking, I do not believe this difficulty would ever have been felt except for the presence of a meagre and poverty-stricken conception of existence to which an unworthy theology has given currency. It, without any warrant of God or Holy Scripture or the reasonableness of things, concludes the whole movement of the universe within the compass of two stadia, "this life" and "next life." Then it assumes that this one is the period of "probation," within which the destiny of every living thing is wrought out and fixed. No

conceivable interest is served by this narrow and artificial scheme of things except that of logical definition. The New Testament has no such constricted outlook. It deals with realities and not systems, and takes little thought of "consistency." Existence is far too large a thing to be seen consistently. The general conception of the New Testament is, that the new life in the individual is begun here, and that he passes on, incomplete, into an existence where the same laws of being operate as do throughout time and space.

No life anywhere without movement.

There can be no life anywhere without movement, progress. Arrest means disintegration. It is true that this life is a period of "probation" for all living things; but it is because life is always and everywhere "under probation." That is to say, it endures so long as it conforms itself to the environing conditions. That necessity must hold good for the "next" life, or the next, or the next, or for as many as may be. By what warrant may we confine the successive phases of being to two, or to any other number? We are concerned now only with the transit from this one that now is to the succeeding one, but we can

only think of the individual form as passing on into actual development and real vicissitude. Jesus is bold to make even Dives develop morally under the scorching discipline of hell. He became there a better man. He reached the point where he could take thought of his brethren, about whom he had not concerned himself before. When the Christian seer calls the bederoll of the Saints who have won the life to come, he declares that "God hath provided that they without us should not be made perfect." Even the souls of the "saints under the altar" are morally lacking the while they cry to God for vengeance upon their persecutors. The next life must be a real life, for real persons, with real experience, or else be dismissed as "the work of a fever and the delirium of a dream." Human life without moral movement is inconceivable at any stage. It is the law of its being. Where in any case the new life is vigorous and stable enough to persist at all, its rudimentary, feeble, and imperfect forms cannot but move in that direction which is determined by their nature and their choice. Jesus himself forestalled the difficulty when in the Parable of the husbandman he bids the

The discipline of the next life.

reapers "let both grow together until the harvest." They are not mature enough yet to be classified. The harvest is

> "That far-off, divine event,
> Toward which the whole creation moves."

The practical question is a narrower, though may be not much less difficult one. What is the essential note of the Christian in the world in which we actually live? The opprobrium of Christianity has always been the Christians. May it be that phenomena have been looked for in them which in their nature is not theirs? The function of the individual Christian in human society has been variously conceived. Is his task to be a model for human conduct? To be an active reformer of manners? To be a herald of new truth? He has been praised and denounced equally for taking and for refusing these rôles. Shall we follow the ascetic and say that the "religious" is ideally the man who separates himself from men, and lives by rule? Shall we hearken to Tolstoi and strip ourselves of property, resent no injury, abjure courts of justice, refuse to bear a sword? Shall we follow the beckoning finger of the sociologist into

The Christian in life.

the study of life with a view of bettering its conditions? Shall we join the philanthropist to distribute bread and provide games? The answer is, All these things we may or may not do, as the case may be. Christianity is compatible with the doing or not doing of any of them, but these things are not Christianity.

The sternness of Love.

The Christian is the soul that wills to love. But Love is an affection strong and wise as well as tender. It may be well for the Christian man to "sell all that he hath and give to the poor"; or it may be well for him to trade with his ten talents and gain ten other talents. He may not allow his love to lead him to do mischief. Here may be a community of poor, living squalidly, lacking bread, crowded together and half-sheltered, naked, sick, and cold. In their midst lives one of Christ's family who is rich. But suppose that community have no moral right to be there at all? Allow that it is collected and held together by lust, greed, indolence, selfish thriftlessness? Grant that nothing short of the hard stress of hunger and the discipline of cold will bring it to a better mind. What course of action will love point out to the Christian?

I mean real love, the love that is solicitous, that wills good and not pleasure, the love which is strong enough to bear its own anguish rather than find relief in opening its hand in largesse. And in what does this situation differ from that of the Son of Man, richly endowed with the power to heal and relieve, and surrounded by a world full of sick, palsied, suffering, and naked? "Love finds a way;" but it must be the way which love illuminates. For Christianity to follow the feeble and essentially selfish way of Tolstoi and his kind would be to transform it from a world force into a transient makeshift. It may well be that the peril most imminent to Christianity to-day is to submit itself to the domination of a soft affection, like that of a fond and foolish mother for a spoiled and exacting child. The law of the Christian's being is indeed to love, even his enemies; to bless, even his persecutors; but it must be with a good which works good and not harm to the enemy, and a blessing which blesses them that work him evil. It is no paradox that the whole vocabulary of stern denunciation and judgment current in religious speech was coined by Jesus, and that its motive was his un-

Feeble conceptions of love.

bounded love. His "woe unto you" is as much part of his message as his "blessed are ye."

Dynamic love.

Nor may the Christian put aside the sword when that is the weapon to which love points. The Puritans had a fine phrase for the character which they held in honor, "He was faithful even unto slaying." The angelic message was "peace to men of good will"; not a soft and undiscriminating peace to men who deliberately will ill. Here again the peril to Christianity may be not so much from those who too eagerly thrust the sword into its hand as from those who cry peace, peace, when there is no peace. There is evil in the world which is to be conquered and exorcized by gentleness; but there is also evil which is to be driven down a steep place and choked in the sea. The Christian law is to love one's neighbor as himself; neither less nor more. But is one not bound to discipline himself, with stripes if need be? If it be better for him to cut off his right hand or pluck out his right eye if it cause him to offend, shall love for himself hinder him? Shall love forbid him to do so much for his brother? The widespread delusion which prevails in our time,

the distress which many are suffering who would do the Master's will could they but see the way, rises out of a confusion of thought. The law of the new Kingdom is for them that are within the Kingdom. There it can operate safely, and with incalculable potency. But it is not the law of the "kingdoms of the earth." If it be attempted to apply it prematurely, or in a sphere where the spirit which is its dynamic is absent, it becomes the feeble and artificial rule of doctrinaires. The New Order of man comes up, lives, and multiplies like the old. That one made its appearance on earth amid "the dragons weltering in the prime." He struggled for existence according to the laws of his own nature; but he did not essay to bring the dragons under his law. The kingdoms of the earth are not yet the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. "His method was the successive winning of separate souls, now an Andrew, now a Peter, now a Philip, until he had discovered and won to himself a few men and women fitted to herald and inaugurate a higher and more perfect social life."

The law of the Kingdom for the Kingdom.

It is no doubt true, as is often objected, that good men will not of necessity make a

good society. But it is not true of the kind of good men that Christ begets. A community of that kind could be nothing else but good, for the controlling quality in each individual is that will to love which is the very bond of all virtues. In any case, Christ's policy is plain. The law of the Kingdom is not to be promulgated prematurely, nor is it to be expected to function where the conditions are not present. His folk are counselled to be wise as serpents as well as harmless as doves. If they be wise, they will not attempt to "restore the kingdom to Israel" at this time or any other. They will live their own immortal lives, and quicken ever new lives into their own by contact of life with life. They are to be the salt of the world. The use of salt is not for shining and arid blocks to build temples and state houses withal. It does its work by disappearing in the mass to sweeten it. It is leaven, a single cell of which starts a fermentation where it touches. Its manner of life is not that of the lump in which it works, but its own. When its function is completed, it finds that it has done its work by dying.

Do good men make a good society?

This also is the judgment of the great,

The wise world's judgment.

wise world upon the matter. When the impatient Christian who would hasten the Kingdom enters the region of political action, or social order, or economic arrangements, the world looks after him with a smile, or a shrug, or a malediction, as the case may be. Its accurate instinct tells it that this is not his sphere of action. Its hoarded experience, moreover, tells it that mischief may come of it. A Christian Socialism, Christian Economics, Christian Education, are phrases which will not bear analysis. If one should speak of Christian Chemistry or Christian Mathematics, the confusion involved would be obvious, but it exists in the other phrases none the less. Christian men have indeed to do with the activities of life, and must needs go into every region of it. But they do not go for the purpose of overturning the laws which obtain in those regions. Wherever they go, they meet beings of their own kind, and they transform others into their own likeness by vital contact. There is a free masonry of the spirit which does not exhibit the work of its lodge in the market place or the legislature. When his friends would have "taken Jesus by force and compelled him to be a king" he departed and

hid himself. The type of the Christian man is Jesus. If one can get free from the misconceptions which blind him, he will see the marvellous simplicity of that life. He chose a way of life which could be trusted. He set out neither to seek a cross for himself, nor to readjust the world's confusion. He went not a single step out of his path to find a pang of body or soul. Such hurts as might be avoided without missing his purpose were avoided. He met the cross because it stood in his path. He neither sought nor shunned it. Nor did he meddle in any way with institutions or collective terms of evil. Intemperance, cruelty, slavery, injustice, infanticide, and divorce were all about him. They flourish as vigorously yet in heathennesse. Within Christendom he and his kind have reduced them, and expect to eradicate them. But what success has been achieved has been by his method. The organizers of reforms and secretaries of societies have their work to do, and where their work is most efficient is where their personnel is most Christian, but after all it remains true that "the Kingdom of Heaven cometh not with observation." The regenerating force in human society has been

The Christian method.

and is that innumerable company of unknown men and women who have been transformed in the image and likeness of Christ, who do not cry nor lift up their voices in the street, but quicken the world by simply living their new life. Outwardly they look and act much as other men; but essentially they are new creatures.

"The Christian seed is never sown in a neutral and empty soil. No soul, no social state, is a *tabula rasa.* The place is always occupied by anterior traditions of ideas, rites, or customs, by institutions in possession. Christianity cannot, therefore, root itself anywhere without entering into conflict with the regnant powers, without giving battle to prejudices, manners, and superstitions, which naturally resist, and which, being conquered, spring up again within the conquering religion. What shall we say of the Catholic Church after Constantine? Is it not true that in the religious transformation at that time effected there was a double and mutual conversion, and that it is hard to say whether the pagan world was more modified by the Church or the Church was more penetrated and invaded by the manners and the religion that it was supposed to replace?"

— Agust Sabatier.

"The idea of One Holy Catholic Church was not early developed in the consciousness of Christendom. In the East this article of the Church does not occur in the creed of Ignatius, A.D. 107, nor in that of Origen at the middle of the third century, nor in the creed of Lucian of Antioch at the beginning of the fourth century. It first appears in the private creed of Arius, 328. The Nicene creed has no article of the Church, but in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan form it appears in all its fulness, 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.' This point was reached toward the close of four hundred years of Christian thought."

— Wood, "Survivals in Christianity."

CHAPTER VII

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

It is plain that Christ had in mind a Church; it is as plain that the thing which we call the Church is not the thing he had in mind. The difficulty which one confronts at the outset is to find the thing at all. To speak exactly, there is no objective reality to which the title "Christian Church" can be applied. There are churches a plenty, but there is no Church. If one fancy that there is, let him ask himself, Where is it? Let him point to it, define it, locate it, delimit it. If he urge that the hundreds of organizations which we call churches are actually the component parts of some great, all-embracing Kingdom, we can only say that he has not stopped to examine the content of his own thought. What he has in mind is the image of an empire which includes within it separate and partially independent states. That conception is a perfectly coherent and legitimate one. It

is possible for an empire to be thus constituted; but only on the condition that the constitutive states act harmoniously toward a common end, and that the empire have a conscious will and purpose of its own. But this is precisely what the churches do not do. They do not act together harmoniously; they confront and oppose each other; they do not work toward a common end, for they do not conceive the purpose the same way; and the universal Church thus imagined has neither a conscious will and purpose of its own nor any organ by which to express it. "The One Holy Catholic Church" is a phrase to which no objective reality corresponds.

No Christian Church extant.

Nor does it help the matter to reflect that no ideal is ever realized in this world except imperfectly, approximately. There is no perfect Government anywhere. All political arrangements are only more or less successful attempts toward realizing an ideal state. That is true; and therefore we frankly recognize that there is no such thing as "One Catholic State." Meanwhile each state within its own territory lives its own life. This, again, is what the churches do not do. They occupy the same

territory at the same time, and divide the citizens among them. In the political sphere we can indeed see a steady movement toward unification, and this movement has been visible for a long time. There are not one-half as many separate governments in the world to-day as there were even a century ago. So far as one can see, there is a much more immediate prospect of a Catholic State than of a Catholic Church. It is a startling fact that the most potent divisive force at work in human society is the Church. All other barriers are easier to overcome, all other schisms easier to heal. This is all the more amazing when we reflect that the organization of Christianity is an affection; and that the dying prayer of its founder was "that they all may be one!" The actual facts are indeed so monstrous that Christians habitually try to disguise them. They fondly imagine an ideal Church at some undefined date or place in the past, whose unity has been broken, but which we may hope to see restored; or that the rivalries are not really rivalries, but emulations; or that the Church is essentially an invisible, transcendental thing, not meant to

The Church the divisive force in the world.

show concretely on earth. But these are only fond imaginings. However they may satisfy those who nurse them, the great open-eyed world knows better.

Let us examine the situation as it actually is. There is no Christian Church, that is, there is no such world organization with a conscious mind and will, and organs to give them expression, and there has not been for fifteen centuries or more. Whether there ever was, or ever ought to be, is a question to be considered later. Instead, we find the Christian world divided ecclesiastically in three great sections. Each of these acts not only apart from the others, but acts habitually with a view to thwart, restrain, or overthrow the others. Each has a separate spirit, a different organizing principle. The Oriental Churches are organized around the principle of Dogma. The object which they place above all others is to conserve and hand down through the ages certain formularies which express what they conceive to be finalities of the truth concerning Christ. To this end all else is subordinated. They call themselves the "Orthodox" Church. The outcome of this spirit has been what might have been expected. It

The Church of Dogma.

has been intellectual stagnation and moral impotence. The Eastern Church sits to-day in its tawdry Basilica an embalmed corpse, robed in stiffly embroidered vestments, with a Creed in its dead hand, while the people bow before it with the forehead, and hear from its lips no voice which reaches their souls. Its people are devout, ignorant, superstitious; its rulers are orthodox, cruel, punctilious of ecclesiastical form, and lacking in truth and ruth. A keen observer, who had great opportunity to know, has said that "the Russian Empire is really not an empire at all; it is a Church, and its qualities are those which the Church has produced." This church has had a longer continuous life than any other, and so far as one can see, it has in the main missed the purpose of the Master. In any case, it stands remote from the rest of the Christian world, understanding it little, and little affected by it.

The Church of Empire.

The second in order, both historically and geographically, is the Church of Rome. As the Russian Empire is, strictly speaking, not an empire, but a Church, so this, to be accurate, is not a Church, but an Empire. Its organizing principle is dominion. Its cardi-

nal claim is Authority; its cardinal virtue is Obedience. Its claim is in no way disguised or mitigated. It asserts itself as the true and only Church of Christ on earth. Its Pope is God's vicegerent and is infallible. Within it there is eternal safety; outside there is no safety. Because God has ordained it so, it has authority over every region of human life and action, its only limit being its own judgment not to enter upon any given area. If it does not regulate political or domestic arrangements, it is only because it decides in its own wisdom not to do so, and not because it is without the right to do so. Its one aim is domination. To this it adjusts all its power and all its machinery. Its information is drawn from every quarter. Its ministers and officials are loose-footed Janizaries, who may not take root anywhere in family life, or form human affections which may weaken or hamper their absolute devotion to the organization which they serve. Its characteristic title is "Catholic"; it claims authority over all. It is the old Roman Imperium baptized. It believes that in this fashion it represents Christ's will and best carries out his intention. Is it

The Roman Imperium baptized.

right in this judgment? Is it likely to succeed?

The first of these inquiries I need hardly wait to answer. But the second is one about which well-informed men are slow to form an opinion. Personally, I do not believe that any one is warranted in either hoping or fearing that the Roman idea of the Church will prevail. It has within it elements of great potency, as all must see, but has within it also the seeds of its own necessary decay. Looking over its history during the centuries, one is struck by the fact that at the times and places where its success has been most complete its overthrow has been most imminent. It ought to be borne in mind that this ideal of universal dominion was not always held by the Roman Church. It took possession of the organization slowly, but in the end controlled it entirely. Nowhere else in history, probably, has equal patience and sagacity been displayed in working toward the realization of an ideal, and nowhere else more complete and iterated failure. From the sixth century onward for nearly a thousand years this organization dreamed, planned, labored, prayed, and fought for

The outlook for the Roman Church.

dominion over Western Europe. Finally, it gained its end. At the opening of the sixteenth century there was none to gainsay its will. King and artisan, scholar and peasant, were alike docile subjects of this ecclesiastical empire. But within it were gathering the forces for its disruption. Within a century it lost the British Islands, Scandinavia, the most of Germany, with local insurrections throughout its whole domain. Then, with the same infinite patience and skill, it set about the task of reconstruction. Once again it succeeded within a more restricted area in Europe, but replaced the lost territory with a wider empire in South America and Mexico. Three centuries more have gone by, and during them it has lost its rule in France, Mexico, in South and Central American states, and finally in Italy itself. In all these cases, wherever the people have had opportunity to express their will by vote, they have turned against the Church, refused to do her will, restrained her pretensions, secularized her accumulated wealth, expelled her agents, in a word, revolted against her principle of dominion. These things have happened too often and too uniformly to be attributed to

The failure of Rome.

accident or to the unruly wills and passions of men or times. They can well be accounted for as the operation of a law which may always be counted upon to show itself when the time is full. Will the same cycle be run in these United States, where the immediate destiny of the world is lodged? One must needs fear it, or hope it, according to his wish. For history has an old habit of repeating itself. We may well remind ourselves, moreover, that history now runs with a vastly swifter movement than of old. Here is the same ancient claim of dominion, — nothing abated, nothing disguised. Here is the same patience, skill, and devotion in upbuilding. Here is the same semblance of success. Will there be the same revolt and overthrow? And when?

Rome and America.

The third segment of the ecclesiastical circle is that ill-defined aggregation which we call Protestantism. The spirit and temper which differentiates it has been in the world always; but in so far as it is organized, it dates from the revolt against the Roman claim to domination in the sixteenth century. With it we are more immediately concerned. How nearly does it

The Protestant organizations.

present Christ's ideal of a Church? What is its outlook? When one reads its history, from the time of Luther, Colet, Cranmer, Calvin, he is impressed by the fact that as an ecclesiastical force it has lost much of its original energy. Its course reminds one of a mighty shell fired by an enormous charge. While it held together its momentum was terrific, but as it broke into fragments each fragment possessed less energy. When these in succession subdivided, their potential energy became still feebler. The explosive power which impelled it originally was the sense of individual liberty, — liberty of conscience, liberty of thought, liberty of action. When these are restrained or repressed, they gather an ever increasing fulminating energy. But when they are set free, maybe with noise and commotion, they do not always quite know what to do with themselves. This is the condition of the Protestant churches. They are free, and they do not quite know what next. Liberty is a dangerous spirit to raise. The only power able to control it is Truth. But here they hesitate and fumble. A century ago each one had a Confession or a System of truth which satisfied it. It had a mes-

Loss of initial velocity.

sage which, whether true or faulty, it could deliver when challenged. But now the very spirit of intellectual freedom which they invoked has examined these doctrinal structures, and in the name of Truth has condemned them. Things which they had thought settled for all time have been brought in question. Such essential portions of the Protestant message as its doctrine of future rewards and penalties, its denial of an intermediate state of Probation, its doctrine of Holy Scripture, its conception of human nature, have all been forced open.

Unstable Confessions.

The result has been to produce a hesitation and sense of uncertainty which bodes ill for its organization. This shows itself in a hundred ways. It lacks a clear and definite message to both heathen and Christian peoples. Once it could go to the heathen with a heart full of pity for a man who, it believed, would be consigned to eternal torment in hell if the missionary failed to reach him in time to save. It does not believe that now; but it has not found clearly what motive will take its place and do its work. This shows even more plainly in the work of church extension at home. It might be difficult to find a place where greater disingenu-

ousness prevails than here. Congregations of Christian people are exhorted to labor and give "to carry the Gospel to them that are perishing." With their gifts the missionary machinery of the denomination plants a church in a community where the Gospel has been proclaimed for years, and where there are only too many churches already. The motive which is urged is not really the motive which controls. The aim is not really to "carry the Gospel," it is to extend and aggrandize the ecclesiastical organization. If any church actually believes that outside of itself salvation is not to be found, this appeal is morally worthy, whatever may be said of its reasonableness. But if it does not believe that, one shrinks from giving its action a name.

Is Protestantism a spent force?

It at least looks as though organized Protestantism were a spent force. It is uncertain and hesitating in its message; its rivalries and consequent wastefulness tend to render it impotent; it has lost the controlling position it once held in schools, colleges, and universities; the laboring classes have largely drifted beyond the sound of its voice; the middle classes are less and less keeping holy its Sabbath

day. Its Revival machinery has to a large extent been abandoned as no longer efficient. General Booth declares that the Salvation Army as well as all other companies which set out with the single aim to "save souls," tend irresistibly to become instruments for the distribution of secular charity. An ever increasing number of people who have been counted within the Protestant churches are quietly dropping away. It is not so much that they have become hostile, or may be any more indifferent than they have always been, but they no longer feel any reason to continue the nominal connection which they once maintained. It is not powerful enough as an organization to be taken account of, as Rome is, in political life. It is too incoherent to speak or act efficiently in the social sphere. It does not, as it once did, command the enthusiastic service of the religious individual.

Defect of organizing principle.

From all of these things, which are commonplace facts within the ken of all observant men, it would seem that there is something fundamentally faulty in all the attempts which have been made to realize concretely Christ's ideal of a Church. Where the exhibition of Doctrine is the controlling

motive, it ends in Oriental stagnation. Where empire is its aim, it runs around within the closed cycle of Rome, through growth, dominion, tyranny, revolt, and around again. Where individual freedom is the goal, it issues in confusion and weakness. Neither Orthodoxy, nor Catholicity, nor Liberty, nor any nice balance of them all, can be the notes or the tests of the Society which Christ contemplated.

Two objections.

Against this whole view two objections are likely to be opposed. In the first place the churches are actually strong and mighty, and are striving vigorously to conquer the world for Christ. Their statistics of growth can always be marshalled in such a way as to spell success. Nevertheless, their general course through a long period of time has been as I have set forth. In calculating the line of movement of any body one can only study that portion of its orbit which has been under observation. From that the equation of its curve is calculated, and its destination is predicted.

The second objection is that it is inconceivable that the Divine Founder of the New Kingdom should have allowed its line of movement to be thus deflected to barren

issues. Could he have permitted such long time to be wasted while his people made and discovered their own mistakes? We can only reply by directing attention to what is God's actual way of doing things. Nature ran out a myriad of aimless lines before she found that one which culminated in Man. How many more æons were seemingly wasted before the New Man was reached? One thing we may be sure of, in the New Kingdom, as in the old, the members thereof will be allowed to find out and retrace their missteps, let the time be long or short.

God reveals by means of men's discovery.

The minds of Christians in all ages since have turned backward with a sort of helpless yearning toward the "Primitive Church." It has been felt that it possessed a secret of power which has in some way fallen out of sight. Probably no equally brief period of time has been studied so exhaustively as has the seventy years which followed the disappearance of Christ. During that time his Society spread with such amazing rapidity, exhibited such a unique life, was so sure of itself, moved toward its purpose with such an inexplicable courage, arrested and held the attention of the encompassing

The lost secret of the Primitive Church.

world in such a way, as to compel the conviction that it knew something which we do not know and wielded a power which we have lost. But the attempt to recover the lost secret has not been satisfactory. May it be that we have not sought for the right thing? Theologians have scrutinized the Early Church to find out what it believed. Ecclesiastics have interrogated it to find out its form of organization — whether it was Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Congregational, whether it recognized this official or that, and which was superior and which subordinate. Liturgists have studied it to find out whether its rites were celebrated in this form or that. Antiquarians have asked it curious questions about its manners and customs. To all these inquiries it vouchsafes but a meagre reply. And, what is of more consequence, it answers in a tone which shows that it deemed all these things of small moment. It refuses to say what its doctrine was, or what its polity. Any, or all, or none, of the interpretations put upon it may be correct. But its secret was not in those things.

There are two conceptions of a Church. One is that it is an Organization, in form

analogous to that of a political State, but in spirit and purpose religious. It is a State which includes within it all sorts of citizens, a few who are intelligently loyal and devoted, and many who accept its citizenship and share its benefits and protection passively, without thought, by force of routine. It includes good citizens and bad. Its terms of naturalization are intentionally adjusted to admit and include all. Most of its members are such by the accident of birth within its frontiers. It is simply human society ordered in one way for religious life as it is ordered in another way for political life. The ideal Church in any country would be one which is exactly conterminous with the state, and of which every inhabitant is *ex officio* a member. In its perfect form the Christian Church and the Christian State would be identical. The distinction between sacred and secular would disappear. In fact, this is the conception of the Church which holds the field. It is true that the ideal is not realized, the Church is broken and divided, but each separate portion acts after the manner of a state. It fixes the terms of citizenship; it counts all born within it as members; it admits, rejects,

Is the Church to be realized through organization?

and expels as it may judge proper. It makes or unmakes citizens according to its own rules. If a member be expelled from one organization, he is free to apply for naturalization in another whose terms may be different. But the goal toward which all these petty religious states look is a condition of things when they shall all have negotiated terms of consolidation, and shall be fused together in one great Christian Church which will include all people. Was this the consummation which Christ had in mind when he projected his Church? Would such a religious commonwealth be the Church of Christ?

The community of a Family.

There is another conception which is drawn from quite a different sphere of human life and action. According to it the Church is not a State, but a Family. It is constituted of individuals whose bond of union is one altogether unlike that which binds citizens together in a state. Its members are related by blood, bound together by a common kinship, cemented by an affection. This affection springs out of their antecedent kinship. This Family is in the world, but not of it. It increases and multiplies, but by its own methods.

As such, it has no concern with the secular life in the midst of which it lives. It has its own ideals, its own activities, and finds its own satisfactions. It is not an organization, but an organism; not an aggregation, but a brotherhood.

Now it is commonly assumed that these two conceptions of the Church can live and act together; that it can be at the same time a State and a Family; that it can at once expand according to the ways of a state, and grow according to the ways of a biological kingdom. This cannot be. A thing cannot at the same time be built like a house and grow like a plant. The two modes of being are incompatible. To recognize this confusion in thought would go far toward setting the Church in the way to correct its practical confusions.

The Brotherhood of the New Life.

Any one looking carefully at the Early Church cannot fail to see that it thought of itself as a Family, and not an organization. Its every act and word shows this. It was a little group of men and women, each one of whom felt within himself the thrill of a new life. They were "alive in Christ." They had been "born again," made "new creatures," "old things had passed away

and all things had become new" for them. They were bound together in this new spiritual kinship. It constituted for them a relationship far closer than friendship or even blood. So completely did it take possession of them that for a time they had all things in common; neither did any count anything his own. To express it, they sold all their possessions and brought the proceeds to the Apostles' feet for distribution among the brethren. Their motive had nothing in common with that which produces "Socialism." It did not spring from any notion of "a common humanity," or a "love for all mankind." They took no account of mankind as such. As a fact they were denounced by their contemporaries as "haters of mankind." When they spoke of "the brethren," "the faithful," "the saints," they meant those individuals, many or few, who shared with them the new life. When they preached, their message was "the resurrection and the new life." They imparted this new life by personal contact. When the divine spark was kindled in any one, he was baptized and numbered among the disciples. He was baptized *because*, as St. Peter said of Cor-

nelius and his friends, "they have received the Holy Spirit even as we." There was no doctrinal test at all, in our sense of the word. There was no moral test save the evidence of the "new life." Nor by that did they mean any superior morality, but only the new spirit which they confidently trusted to produce the Christlike conduct. They met together in affectionate family groups for the Breaking of Bread. Such rites as they had were simple and natural. Such officials as they had were not sharply distinguished from the rest of the brethren. Their aim was to spread a new kind of life, not to organize and expand an institution. Their success was the most wonderful thing in human history.

Transformation of the Brotherhood into an Empire.

This "Brotherhood of the New Life" in that form passed out of sight at the end of the first century, like as a western river disappears in the sand. For nearly two centuries thereafter almost nothing is known concerning it. When it emerged again in the full light of history, its Gospel had become "Christianity." The upper room where the family group had broken bread together had become the gorgeous Basilica; the elder had become the pontiff; the simple Communion

meal had become a sacramental function; instead of the little companies bound together in affection, we find the great congregations strangers to one another; instead of "disciples," it now embraces the population of the empire from the Cæsar down; instead of a band of brethren sharing their possessions with each other, we have a Church with imperial endowments. It has a hierarchy, liturgies, canons, creeds, disciplines, machinery for propagandism, diplomacy. In a word, the society which passed out of sight a spiritual brotherhood reappears a religious Empire. Was this a development or a transformation?

The Church's political unity.

For a brief period this Ecclesiastical State preserved a political unity, identified with the unity of the empire. But presently the empire began to disintegrate, and the Church broke up with it. From that time to this the political conception of the Church has continued; but there has been no time — not even for a single day — when one could point to any organization and say, this is the Church, or this. Now, at the beginning of this twentieth century since Christ, multitudes of good men are profoundly dissatisfied with the situation. Their quarrel is

not with this church or with that one. They hold aloof from them all. But they are a kind of men which Christianity has produced. They hold Christ in unfeigned reverence. They are not sure whether or not they accept the definitions of him which the churches set forth in their formularies. They do not pretend that they could define him any better, though they feel that they would define less. They possess the same spirit which was in Him, many of them to a preëminent degree. But they have no use for a church. In Catholic countries they firmly refuse to yield it the personal submission which it demands. There are indications, moreover, that the attitude of passive aloofness which they have there maintained for a long time is changing into active impatience and hostility. In Protestant communities they refuse to acknowledge the divine sanction of any church. To speak frankly, the things about which they see the churches concerning themselves appear to them to be paltry and unreal. Their doctrinal discussions appear remote and academic. Their rites seem conventional and their teaching artificial. They gauge accurately the churches' real influence in

Christians unattached.

practical affairs, and they hold the opinion that the controlling motive of each one is to exploit society in its own interest. This is the class with which the Church must reckon. It is one which she has never before confronted on any large scale. Now it is increasing with enormous rapidity. One may rightly say that its presence is the characteristic feature of the religious situation. Among it is a large proportion of the leaders in every region of life. They are managers of affairs, administrators of charities, educators, college professors, governors of states, legislators and senators, editors of newspapers, judges, teachers, publicists, mechanics, and farmers.

The Church within the churches.

The primitive conception of the Church has never perished. It has been oversloughed by the political imagery employed, but it has always persisted. Christians still speak of each other as "brethren," even in circumstances where the epithet is less than appropriate. They still have a definition of the real Church which they never apply to the actual one. They call it "The Blessed Company of all Faithful People." The language which they spontaneously use at the times of deepest devotion always echoes the origi-

nal thought. At Baptism the terms used to indicate the meaning of the transaction are biological terms. The subject is "regenerated," "grafted into the body of Christ's Church." They are terms which would be meaningless in any political connection. They throw back to a time when the Church thought in those terms. They speak of one being "received as God's child by adoption," "dying unto sin," "living unto righteousness," "crucifying the old man," "sharing the death and resurrection of Christ," and such like. In the other Sacrament the same conceptions control. Its terms and symbols are vital, not political, ones. And for the reason that, as things are, at that Sacrament and there only the real Church is met with. It speaks its own language because there are no foreigners present. Was it wise for it ever to attempt a universal tongue?

Its vital terms.

Here, then, would seem to be the key to the whole perplexing situation. The Church of Christ began as a new Family in the world. It was meant to grow according to its own law of reproduction. For a time it did so. Eventually, but slowly, it would have absorbed and assimilated all from among men who are ready to "be born

again." But the process was slow, costly, painful. When its pain was at the heaviest, the Emperor of the world offered it "all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them" at once, and the wearied Church accepted. Instead of transforming the world, the world transformed the Church. Thus did the "fatal gift of Constantine" seduce and mislead the Bride of Christ!

The Bride of Christ seduced by the Emperor.

But if this be true in any real sense, what is there for the Church to do? Can she retrace her stumbling steps back to the fourth century, find the place where the path forked, and start anew along the other branch? We may be quite sure she will not do this, except as a last resort. The dream of being a world power has been too long entertained for that. The habit of reckoning success by numbers has become a second nature. So long as by any means the numbers can be maintained, the habit will continue. But there are indications from every quarter that the Church may be forced to retrace her steps and resume her old ideal. Few realize how profound is the revolution which has occurred during late times in the relation between the Church and organized society. In Constantine's time

Christianity became the official religion of the state. From that time onward, for fifteen hundred years, the state built churches, maintained them, constrained the people to attend them. This came to be everywhere regarded as the natural as well as the divine order of things. The force of statutes, the resources of taxation, the power of the common law, could all be appealed to in the interest of the Church. This condition remained until the United States, the first government in the world to do so, decreed in her constitution that Congress "should make no law concerning religion." The far-reaching consequences of that provision were probably not dreamed of by any man then living. But it started a movement for which the world had long been preparing, the final outcome of which can only be to take from the Church's hand the staff upon which she had leaned almost throughout her journey. When she asked for liberty, for "separation of Church and State," she little realized what its effect would be upon her own fortunes. That effect has been long in showing itself. Long after the state officially withdrew its support, society from use and wont continued to do through pressure of

The Bride abandoned by the Emperor.

custom and public opinion that which law had once compelled. But we have now about reached the point where society follows the Constitution. We are, in spite of ourselves, being pushed, or led, back to the position of the primitive Church. That was a voluntary association of the followers of Jesus, living and acting in the midst of a society which took no account of it or its rules, except as they were won, one at a time, to submit themselves to the new Way. The Emperor has forsaken the Church which he seduced!

Protestants must find the path.

In proportion as the Church realizes and accepts the situation, will it find its path clear, though no doubt painful. But if the path is to be found, Protestants must find it. So far as one can see, the Roman Church has so completely identified her life with the idea of empire that to abandon it would be suicide. It may even be likely that, for a considerable time to come, her gain may be great by reason of the migration to her of those who have felt after the same ideal in Protestantism, without finding satisfaction. But even so, the obstacles in the way of her realizing her dream are multiplying as time goes on. Her ultimate failure would seem

to be inevitable from the nature of things. For the same reasons those churches which affect to maintain a nice balance between two incompatible conceptions of what Christ's Society is, must dwindle by the dropping away of those who find no satisfaction in them either way. But is it too much to expect that within Protestantism, where the individual soul is the supreme consideration, the *disjecta membra* of the Christian Fraternity may draw together and become a Christian Church in which the true apostolic succession may be rediscovered and perpetuated. Such a Church, pretending to be nothing but what it is, with the sad experience of the centuries to enlighten it, would find Church Unity a thing already achieved. Its creed, discipline, and ministry would arrange themselves, for they would be, as they were originally, the natural expression of its life. No doubt they would be substantially the same they have always been, but they would occupy a different and far less conspicuous place than that now generally allowed them. Its creed would be, maybe, less precise, but more vital; its ministry less prominent and more serviceable; its discipline not that of rules, but

True apostolic succession.

that inexorable law by which living forms choose and reject among the things they touch.

Such a Church would be undisturbed by the exodus now occurring. It would see in it what it actually is, the automatic correction of an erroneous census made mistakenly long ago. If the Church has been the victim of a miscount, and has been betrayed into leaning upon those upon whom she never had any valid claim, it is best to know the truth, and as soon as may be. For such a Church many souls are waiting. Good men, like those I have instanced above, do not stand aloof from the organization as it is now because it is too religious, but because it is not religious enough. They would greet with sober ardor a Society which offered them the new and abiding life in Christ, and which took no thought at all for itself. For Christ's dictum is as true for a Church as it is for a man, "whoso humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased."

A membership ready.

"What could be easier than to form a catena of the most philosophical defenders of Christianity, who have exhausted language in declaring the impotence of the unassisted intellect? Comte has no more explicitly announced the incapacity of man to deal with the Absolute and the Infinite than has the whole series of orthodox writers. Trust your reason and you will become Atheists or Agnostics, we have been told till we are tired of the phrase. Well, we take you at your word; we become Agnostics." — LESLIE STEPHEN.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHRISTIAN GOD

THE good man of to-day is uneasy because he has lost his god. He is as the lusty youth whose hunger for love torments him because he can find no mistress to fold in his affections. The man of to-day is at bottom religious. He would reverence, adore, obey, a god gladly if he could find one who would satisfy him. In such case the primitive man would make gods for himself of wood and stone, paint and bedeck them with feathers and shells, and prostrate himself before them all content. The classic pagan would have fashioned idols from his imagination, endowed them with graces and passions, filled Olympus with them, and found satisfaction for his religious hunger in the poetic fancies which he wove around them.

The twilight of the Gods.

But we of to-day have neither the simplicity of the savage nor the imagination of the Greek. We are at once intelligent and practical. But we still possess the faculty to

wonder and to worship. Who and what shall we bow down to? A brilliant, but not convincing, writer has lately set forth his "Gospel for an Age of Doubt." Ours is not an age of doubt, it is one of hesitation and helplessness. It is a very serious age, with a grim determination for truthfulness. It will not pretend. It is not atheistic in temper, it is at heart forlorn. Its restless energy, its feverish activity, its lust for business, are only in part due to love for these things. This world is to-day so much as it is to civilized man because the other world has never seemed so remote.

The bewildering change and progress of the last few centuries has made for us a new earth, and we have not found a new heavens to correspond. The old one will not do. It is manifestly irrelevant. We will be wiser if we realize what the difficulty in the religious sphere really is. It has lost its old idea of God, and it has not found another to take its place. So has come about one of the most wonderful phenomena in the history of religion. There stand outside all the organizations of religion multitudes of the most pious men living. They are for the most part silent about it; I doubt if they

"Great Pan is dead."

speak about it to each other. They often go to church, some of them regularly, but even there they sit aloof. They see their neighbors lifting their hands in prayer and kneeling in holy sacraments, with a wistful feeling of mingled pity and envy. They are often generous of their gifts to forward the cause, but even in giving they question in their own hearts whether they do well or ill. Their difficulty is fundamental. It is not that they have tried and rejected this or the other article of "faith." They stand apart from the whole religious structure of the ages, its churches, creeds, disciplines, theologies, philosophies, prayers, literatures, sanctions, and hopes. All these presuppose a God whose reality they are not able to see, and they look at all these things not with hostility but with wistfulness and helplessness.

God hiding himself.

Let me be more specific. I lay down my pen and look around the shelves of the great theological library in which I write. "Theological," — *i.e.* the Science of God. Here are ranged the sacred books of many cults, the great tomes of the early Fathers; here is the apologetic literature of the Christian centuries; histories of religious thought and

religious institutions; lives of saints and biographies of holy men; evidences, confessions, systems, liturgies, hymns, prayers, discussions, sermons. The one term common to them all is "God." I interrogate them one after another, — "Who and what is God?" Some are surprised at the inquiry, some scandalized, some enraged. They have all assumed that the term "God" connotes a fixed and determined conception. They chide me as irreverent, they denounce me as disobedient, they pity me as blind. I am not blind, but

> ". . . I bend mine eyes on vacancy
> And with the incorporeal air do hold discourse.
> Nothing at all, yet all there is I see."

"Where is now my God?"

This is the situation of modern men by thousands. "Where is now my God?" they ask in every mood, from flippant contempt to moral despair. Nothing less than the rediscovery of God will serve the occasion. Most of the medicaments offered to the spiritual malady of the times must avail little or nothing because the diagnosis has not been sufficiently searching. It is no mere phase of superficial scepticism through which we are passing. Half the men one

meets are "agnostics," and this whether they call themselves that or call themselves Christians. As Professor Flint truly says, "As regards knowledge of God, religious and irreligious men take up the same attitude. Both endeavor to persuade men that there is and can be no such knowledge, that the best attainable is to be content with unreasoned and unenlightened belief."

But that sort of belief is becoming more unsatisfying every day. Belief in a God about whom the believer avowedly knows not anything may be sustained for a time as a sort of religious obligation, or as a surviving habit, but sooner or later must be given up. One cannot stand on tiptoe forever stretching up his hands to the inane. He gets tired, settles down upon his feet, and goes about his everyday business. That is what men are doing. Numbers of them have given up all idea of ever getting hold of anything coherent in the realm of religion, and disturb themselves but little about the matter. Still larger numbers yet join with the worshippers and listen to the preachers, hoping that they may yet, somehow, be converted and enlightened. They are unwilling to face a life emptied of divine

things, but they find satisfaction in no divine person to whom they are introduced. To say that this is their fault, is to confess ignorance or forgetfulness of the truth that no man ever yet did aught else than run to meet God when he had once seen him.

The idea of God as it floats in the mind of the average man is compounded of three or four inherited conceptions, each of which has to a large extent ceased to fit in with the other portions of his mental furniture, and all of which have grown to be impossible.

The Kingly God.

In a certain sense we are all Hebrews; we have inherited the great YAVEH from Israel. Along with much else in Judaism and Paganism, the imperial Church took over the Hebrew God. That deity was conceived of as a great Monarch. He was a King among kings; a Lord of lords. This earth was thought of as his realm. He sat on a "throne," high up above the sky; the sun, moon, and stars were his palace lights; when he spoke the earth trembled, and the sea and the waves thereof roared; he conducted the affairs of his Kingdom as an absolute sovereign; because he commanded

a thing, it was right; and because he forbade another, it was wrong: —

> "Making and marring clay at will. So He
> Thinketh such shows nor wrong nor right in Him,
> Nor kind, nor cruel; He is strong and Lord.
> 'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
> That march now from the mountain to the sea;
> I let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
> Loving not, hating not, just choosing so. . . .
> As it likes me each time, I do; so He. . . ."

He issued ukases; he promulgated laws; he directed events, and summoned offenders to be dealt with as rebels; he was above all responsibility; he was, in a word, the quintessence of Absolutism throned at the centre of the universe. Upon this theme the Old Testament composed its majestic music. We hear it reverberating still in Psalm and Prophet, and with a more artificial modulation, in Christian hymns. This conception of God satisfied. It fitted and was correlated with the actual life and thought of the people who "bowed the knee" before him. Their political life was its reflection; their social life was organized from the bottom up on the monarchical principle. At its summit was the King, and above him was the King of Kings. It is more than merely interesting to note the extent

to which the language of religion is to this day colored by the imagery of political absolutism. But this language was not originally metaphorical; it was meant to be exact, and was universally believed to be so. The honorific titles used in addressing this Deity were intended to express the literal reality. The political life of the people, and their central religious conception lay in harmonious relation to each other.

Their idea of God, moreover, fitted easily with their scientific conceptions. To them Earth was the centre of the universe. Around it the sun moved to give light by day and the moon by night. God's "throne" could not be anywhere on it, and, therefore, they looked for him high above, "in the heavens." They fancied themselves nearer to him on the mountain tops than in the valleys, and that Arcturus and the Pleiades were closer to him than even Carmel or Sinai. They thought of prayer as "rising," of God as "coming," "descending," "ascending up on high," "visiting his people." Their science and their worship were adjusted to each other.

Earth-centred science.

Let no one flatter himself by imagining that his own spiritual conceptions are so pure

and unalloyed by entanglement with any physical basis that they can persist uninfluenced by any revolutions which may occur in that lower sphere. Underlying every abstract conception is a physical image. This imagery is the very framework, the matrix, the determining form thereof.

Now, two revolutions have occurred in the western world which make this inherited conception of God impossible. One of them has taken place in the political and the other in the physical sphere. Absolute Monarchy has long since disappeared as a fact, and with its disappearance all those mental images, habits of thought, forms of speech, which were at home in it have come to seem remote, artificial, unreal. They no longer serve to express the realities of religion to a people who have ceased to use them for other purposes. Those old statesmen who contended for the "divine right of kings" on the ground that democracy led inevitably to "godlessness," were far more right than they knew. It has resulted in the dethronement and exile of *their* God. Human life is too intimately unified to allow consciousness to act after one habit in the political sphere and after another in the religious

Human life democratized.

one. We can no longer represent God to ourselves as the "Great King," without straining to find the reality behind the image, and to frame that reality in some imagery drawn from our real lives. The trouble is, we find no image to fit the need.

Modern conception of earth in space.

The other revolution has occurred in our cosmic conceptions. The Imperial Church was more right than it knew when it condemned Galileo. For, if "the earth does move after all," it is not only the interpretation of the Scriptures which must be readjusted. The Church's God would ultimately find his throne attacked. The smallest part of the confusion wrought by the pestilent philosopher was to turn Astronomy upside down, to transport Earth with her complacent tenant, man, from her proud place at the centre of creation into a paltry ball whirling about on the outer edge of space. It would in the end compel the abandonment of all those spatial forms in which their relation to God was framed. This necessity made itself felt but slowly. Men knew that the earth moved for many a day before they realized it. Heaven had still its old spatial relation to them, and they continued to look for God in the same

place their fathers had. They still looked upward when they adored. Their intelligence and their knowledge far transcended those of the devout Hebrew, but their everyday emotional life and their religious imagery were the same as his. Job and David and the Apocalypse caused them no intellectual confusion or emotional perplexity. At first the new knowledge only dislocated scientific conceptions. But as time has gone on, feeling has followed after knowledge, and worship has become dislocated. In fine, the world of to-day has moved so far away from the monarchical habit in its political life, and its conceptions of time, space, and motion have been so transformed, that it finds the inherited God of the Hebrew and of the Imperial Church unrealizable.

The God of Law.

In our hereditary Pantheon we have also a second God. This one derives from Rome rather than from the Orient. He is the God of Justice. Mr. John Fiske has thus strikingly pictured him: —

"I remember distinctly the conception which I had formed of him when I was five years old. I imagined a narrow office just over the zenith, with a tall, standing

desk running lengthwise, upon which lay several opened ledgers, bound in coarse leather. There was a roof over this office, but the walls rose scarcely five feet from the floor, so that a person standing at the desk could look out upon the whole world. There were two persons at the desk, one of them a tall, slender, old man, of aquiline features, wearing spectacles, with a pen in his hand and another behind his ear; this was God. The other, whose appearance I do not distinctly recall, was an attendant angel. Both were diligently watching the deeds of men and recording them in the ledgers. To my infant mind this picture was not grotesque, but ineffably solemn, and the fact that all my words and actions were written down to confront me at the day of judgment seemed naturally a matter of grave concern."

Young John Fiske's God.

"To my infant mind this picture was not grotesque." The philosophy of the situation is in that phrase. That picture of God was sufficient to the boy, because it fitted into the boy's conception of life and the world. But what of the boy when expanding intelligence makes this picture impossible? What of an age when its ethical movement

has left this bookkeeping God behind? Let us not mistake the situation, however. The moral world has not at all lost the idea of judgment and retribution. It knows full well that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." But it has learned the truth that this comes about not by edict, but in the order of things, that the equities are reached through vital processes, and not by means of judgments handed down from an eternal court of justice constantly sitting. The advance in moral intelligence has rendered it impossible to any longer find a place for the God of Calvin and Augustine and Tertullian within the region of ethical life. That God is irrelevant. It causes the same sense of confusion as it would to conceive of a bookkeeper or an accountant directing the life experiments in a biologist's laboratory. Men have come to see that an individual life is not an isolated "case" to be tried and passed upon. It is bound by heredity with the lives which are before and after, and its moral issues are hidden in the life movements in the midst of which it is set. Thus, the Roman God of justice has followed the Hebrew God of Majesty away from the region of thought in which the world habit-

Judgment from within.

ually dwells, and has become vague, remote, unreal.

The mechanical God.

But does there not still remain God the "Creator"? Is not this universe, which we see, so intelligently contrived and cunningly fashioned that we are compelled by the very constitution of the mind to refer its origin to an Infinite Intelligence? Dr. Paley's classic illustration has not lost its cogency for the everyday man. A stranger walking in the fields finds a watch. Neither he nor any other man has ever seen or heard of such a thing before. As he and his friends study its ingenious structure and discern its purpose, are they not forced to the conclusion that it was fashioned by some intelligent hand, and that it is not the product of any blind chance? And is not the physical universe a mechanism as cunningly contrived as is a timepiece? And must it not have a Maker?

No doubt; the "teleological argument" for the being of God is just as valid as it ever was. But this process never did yield a God of any value for religious uses. At most it points only to an infinitely skilful and powerful Architect and Engineer. It posits him outside of nature and of life.

It can attribute to him no quality save power. From any study of his work it cannot say whether he is well or ill disposed toward men, or whether he has any care concerning them at all. He, or we should rather say, It, is simply Intelligence and Power raised to the "*n*th" degree. No one can even give a guess as to whether it is moral or immoral, good, bad, or indifferent. It is a purely philosophical conclusion, and has not of necessity any religious significance whatever. The only emotions which that conception of God can awaken in the soul are awe, dread, wonder, or curiosity. It touches the mind alone and has no commerce with the conscience or the heart.

Evolution and the Creator.

Furthermore, the profound way in which the doctrine of Evolution has modified our habit of thought has pushed far away the Creator God by interposing between us and him the æon long process of development. It is no doubt true, as John Fiske says, that Evolution brings more to the "argument from design" than it takes away from it. But all the same it does remove the creative action far from the place where the world had been long accustomed to see it. It has in fact "escorted the 'Creator' to the

extreme frontier of the universe, with many expressions of consideration, and returned without him."

The God of sentiment.

In this melancholy condition of things the bereaved world of religion has endeavored to console itself with the quasi-pantheistic conception of a "God Immanent." I cannot but think, however, that this conception is too incoherent and evasive to serve the everyday uses of the average man who would worship. It lends itself readily to a sort of religious poetry. It does touch and quicken a sort of sixth sense with which certain favored ones appear to be endowed. It is no doubt true that he "is not far from every one of us"—

> "Closer he is than breathing; nearer than hands or feet,"

but however near, he does not quite touch.

> . . . "The thin veil
> Which half reveals and half conceals the face
> And lineaments of the king"

may be ever so thin. The soul may almost be able to draw it aside and touch the invisible — almost, but not quite.

At this point speaks the Philosophy which controls the thought of our time. Its word

is, "God is Unknowable." This is not the judgment of evil or shallow men. It is the deliberate conclusion of the earnest minded and best men. Nor is it an excuse offered by intellectual laziness or moral indifference for declining a painful and difficult task. It is the sober judgment of those who have tried "by searching to find out God," and have failed. It is the conclusion of Christian and non-Christian philosophy alike. When Mr. Herbert Spencer had arrived at this conviction for himself, he preferred to state his conclusion in the words of Dr. Mansel, a dignitary of the Church of England. Spencer, the master in philosophy, formulates the dictum; Mansel, the master in theology, phrases it; Huxley, the master in science, gives it its name — Agnosticism; Balfour, a Christian prime minister, indorses and extends it. "Who by searching can find out God?" To the challenge of Job comes the reply of to-day, No one.

Who by searching can find out God?

What then? Shall we abandon the profitless quest and turn to our work, our play, our loves, leaving the eternal riddle of the universe unread? Multitudes are doing just that. You may find them on the exchange,

at the bar, in the counting-room, in the teacher's chair, at the forge and the plough, in the drawing-room and club, and, if you care to seek them there, in the brothel and the gaol. They do not wail with the forlorn Greek, "Great Pan is dead"; but they act as the mourning Greek did after he had outworn his grief. They are without God in their lives. But no one who knows human nature will look upon this as final, or even as likely long to continue. There are always souls athirst for God, — yea, for the living God. There is also that curious unsatisfying quality in life itself, that vague uneasiness which lies in wait for it, which assails it with obstinate questionings. No one need even hope or fear that the quest for God will be abandoned. Agnosticism is not the final word. It is, moreover, a belated word. God is "unknowable"? Christ said so long ago.

"No man cometh to the Father but by Me."

Nothing is more surprising than the persistent attempt to reverse Christ's doctrine in this fundamental matter. Men still fancy that "belief in God" is a prerequisite, preparing the way for one who would be his disciple. They therefore, with well meaning folly, assault the mind with "evi-

dences." They would establish first the being of God by means of arguments drawn from nature, from history, from intuition, from the reasonableness of things. They would first discover God, then introduce Christ as his Son, and prove the relationship. They strangely fail to note that should they be successful in this preliminary task, Christ becomes superfluous. It exactly reverses his method.

For "no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son revealeth him." "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time nor seen his form." "He that seeth me seeth him that sent me." "This is life eternal, that they should know the only real God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." "If ye had known me ye should have known the Father also." "*I* am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." "No man knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son revealeth him." "Ye have not known him; but *I* know him; if I should say, I know him not, I should be a liar like unto you." "*I* am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall

have the light of life;" and to the same purport throughout. And the only God whom the disciples pretended to know was he whom they called "the Father-God of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Here, at last, we reach the elemental fact concerning Christ. According to his own presentation of himself, he is not primarily saviour, or redeemer, or exemplar; he is the Revealer. He offers to uncover the hidden God. He declares categorically that without this action by himself the secret of the universe must remain forever unsolved. At long last the world's thought has come to agreement with him, so far as to be convinced that all the theological chimeras, all the fabrications of philosophy, all the airy structures called divine, are really not God. They are but names; they express no knowable reality. Agnosticism has unwittingly become an apostle. This is a gain whose magnitude will be better realized in the times to come. In the difficult navigation of life it is much to have had those things which have been mistaken for harbor lights examined and shown to be but corposants. When it is once realized that all other avenues toward the Eternal Reality are *cul de sacs*,

Christ the Revealer.

men will be more ready to be guided by him who claims to be the Way, the Truth, the Light.

What, then, is the essential significance of Christ to the world? What but this, — he is "God manifest in the flesh." If the quintessence of the Gospel could be expressed and confined in fit box of alabaster, it would be in that phrase. As to what God may be "absolutely," we know nothing at all. Such magnifical attributes as Infinite, Omnipotent, Eternal, Omniscient, Self-Existent, and the like, are only symbols to hide ignorance, like the algebraic "x" or "n." They stand for unknown quantities, and they are not verifiable. "Eternal," for instance, is a symbol which one marks down at the beginning or the ending of his concept of Time. One sets his thought to moving either backward or forward through duration, and at the point where it falters and stops he writes "eternal" for what lies beyond his reach. So of all the other like phrases. They are not real but *pseudo* concepts, and can only be applied to a *pseudo* God. What that being which we call God may be in completeness, we have no idea, and can never have any. We have neither imagina-

Empty attributes of Deity.

tion to conceive nor words to frame it in. So to speak, we only know him *quantitatively*, — that is, we only know so much of him as is expressible in terms of humanity. We know the Son of Man, who was also the Son of God.

The door in human nature giving upon the divine.

But, having come thus far, we touch another essential element in the revelation of God in the person of Christ. I have said that we only know so much of God as can be expressed in terms of humanity. But humanity opens through one avenue, and through one avenue only, into the infinite. The flesh is circumscribed within the boundaries of physical law. The mind has wider scope, but even intellectual action quickly reaches a point beyond which it cannot move. The conscience is let and hindered by the infirmity of the will. But the *power to love* is literally without bounds. So far as one can see, there is no limit to its field of action or to its duration. Unlike all other human faculties it appears to be incapable of fatigue. The more it works the more vigorous it grows. It has no point of breaking strain. It nourishes itself with the juices which itself supplies. It appears to be independent upon physical conditions.

Love is stronger than death. It is not conditioned upon intellectual vigor, and is largely, if not altogether, outside the operation of the will. Through this rift in phenomenal being Christ exhibits God.

For, when all is said, Christianity is an affection. All its institutions, its machinery, its codes and disciplines, are but vehicles to convey the emotion of Love. Its triumphs are all measured finally by the extent to which it has shown this affection. Its failures are all failures of affection. For "God is Love; and he that loveth is born of God." In Christ humanity discovers its Father who is in heaven. Whoso makes this discovery makes it through his affection.

Christianity is an affection.

But, has not this discovery been made by countless men and women altogether apart from the historical person whom we call Jesus? No doubt; but if so by the same revealer. This is his own distinct claim. They who believe in the "divinity of Christ" must not shrink from the implications of their belief. If he be the "light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world," it must be because he is a light shining wherever and whenever men are. Not less than this is his strange self-asser-

tion, "before Abraham was I am." "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring with me." These also "have the Son" and have life.

The only God the Christian knows.

The Christian God is neither Mr. Matthew Arnold's "Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." Nor is he Professor Huxley's "Force behind phenomena, the same which wells up in us in self-consciousness." These are figments of logic, hypotheses whose chief service is to keep the intellect on good terms with itself. The most unreasonable thing in the universe is Love. It is self-willed, and laughs at wisdom. It behaves like a prince among peasants, coming and going at its own pleasure. It is the only faculty we possess which can pass and repass the ring fence of what we call nature. It is at home in all spheres. Christ's dictum is that God is the eternal principle of Love, self-conscious and intelligent, receiving and returning the affection of all in his universe who have attained unto the "will to love." In himself the two affections meet, coalesce, lose their separate identities, fuse into a single consciousness, and become the God-Man.

This is the only God the Christian pre-

tends to know. His knowledge of God is immediate. It reaches him through his affections. For "he that loveth is born of God." When the will to love, in which the new birth essentially consists, is awakened in him, he at once comes into a new relation with the universe. But that is the least part of it; love hath a wisdom of her own, and shows him at the same time the brother whom he had not recognized, and the Father whom he had not seen. He is just as much at liberty to philosophize as is any other man. The argument from design, and the argument from the moral sense, and all the other bridges which men have tried to construct across the gap between Nature and God are as open to him as to another. But he has learned what they have not, that these bridges, firmly anchored and strongly buttressed as they are on the end which touches Nature, do not reach quite across. At the farther end there remains the chasm between the end of argument and the beginning of certainty. If God is to be known, he must come to us; we cannot go to him.

"We read in our books of a too nice *Athenian*, being entertained in a Place by one given to Hospitality, finding anon that another was received with the like courtesie, and then a third, growing very angry, 'I thought,' said he, 'that I had found here a *Friends House*, but I find I am fallen into an *Inne* to entertain all comers, rather than a lodging for some private and especial Friends.'

"Let it not offend any that I have made Christianity rather an Inne to receive all, than a private house to receive some few." — JOHN HALES.

"Then shall the righteous say, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? or a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." — JESUS.

CHAPTER IX

THE KINGDOM

THE controlling principle of Christ's teaching and living is that the essential quality of the being whom we call God and whom he calls "Father," is love. There is the echo of a gracious patriarchal relation in his speech. He presents his "Father," not as a great king conducting the complex affairs of an empire, nor as a creator constructing and regulating the complicated movement of the universe, but rather as some venerable and benignant Oriental sheik. He has children and descendants beyond count, and in their veins his own blood flows. He has flocks and herds, servants and estates, vineyards and fields. But as these have multiplied his children have moved away from and become unmindful of their father, and of their kinship with each other. This fact weighs, an eternal burden, on the patriarch's heart. They are indifferent to him, and they quarrel with one

The Divine Patriarch.

another. No machinery of government or law or threat or penalty can reach the situation. The one thing and the only thing which can bring harmony out of the confusions of existence is the restoration of the family affection.

But it is plain that this cannot be brought about by compulsion. The verb "to love" has no imperative mood. God can no more force a man to love him than can a man compel the affection of his wife or his neighbor. This is a place where coercion defeats its own purpose. Nor are arguments of any more avail. Love laughs at reasons. This is the explanation of the proven impotence of both Theology and Ethics. Theology addresses itself to the intelligence, and Ethics to the conscience, whereas it is the affections which are primarily concerned. "My son, give me thine heart" is the burden of God's speech.

The God of Theology without heart.

The very most that Theology as a science can effect is to establish that the nature and action of God in the universe is probably thus and so. But the crucial point, at which it signally breaks down, is in the attempt to show that the God of thought has a heart. A candid survey of the actual

facts of life leaves one in doubt as to whether he is well disposed or ill disposed, whether the world is controlled by a Power who wishes well or wishes ill or is utterly indifferent to the fortunes of men. Looking at the course of history in a large way, it is possible, no doubt, to discern in its movement "a Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." It is possible, but it is not inevitable. For, while it is true that a steady progress in goodness and gentleness can be seen from time to time in this or that people, or race, or epoch, still, even these appear to be arrested finally by the stronger law of age and decline.

> "So careful of the type? But no,
> From scarped cliff and quarried stone
> She cries, 'A thousand types are gone;
> I care for nothing; all shall go.'"

Even were it possible to establish the fact that the race is being steadily led forward in goodness, there is nothing to show that the Power which leads it has either hate or ruth for the individual. The old ditty has in it the concentrated experience of the ages, —

> "As I walked by myself I talked to myself,
> And thus myself did say to me:

'Look to thyself, and take care for thyself,
For nobody cares for thee.'

"Then I turned to myself and I answered myself
In the selfsame revery:
'Look to thyself or look not to thyself,
The selfsame thing shall be.'"

Ethical Systems superfluous.

The most that any Ethical System can do, on the other hand, is to express an opinion, more or less weighty, that men ought to act toward one another thus and so. It may well be doubted whether men have ever been appreciably influenced by any scientific presentation of Morals. From Confucius and Aristotle down, the Moralist has been a speculator in abstractions. As Hudibras says of another sort of theorizers,

"All the rhetorician's rules serve only for to name his tools,"

so of the Ethical systematizer. His achievement is only to take a few instinctive "oughts" and "ought nots" which are already present in practice in human society, arrange them in the symmetrical way which he fancies, expound their relationships, and — with but scant success — try to trace their origin. There is no motive power in ethics, whether as a judgment by the individual, or as a law imposed from without.

Not that Theology and Ethics are useless. The intelligence which craves knowledge of the Unknowable both will and ought to seek its satisfactions. The moral conduct of men needs regulation from day to day, and society must control it, with what knowledge it can gather from all quarters. But neither of these have to do, except indirectly, with Christ's scheme of things. They do not concern that element in human nature to which he makes his appeal.

The disturbing force in the universe.

It is commonly assumed that the disturbing element in life is that thing which we call Sin. But this is not Christ's view. It is most significant that while he lived he offended the moralist and the conventionally religious by what they thought to be the laxity of his moral judgments. Publicans and sinners were his daily companions. The woman surprised in the very act of committing the capital offence against social morals was rescued by him from her accusers, and dismissed with only a kindly warning. The leman of Simon the Pharisee received from him no harsher condemnation than "she sinned much because she also loved much." On the other hand, Dives, whom he consigned to the torments of hell,

had not actively sinned at all. The Scribes and Pharisees, whom he denounced unsparingly, were probably as little liable to accusation as it is possible for men to be.

All Sin is Selfishness.

His contention from first to last is that the evil in life is not sin, but Selfishness. It would probably be more accurate to say that he reached down to the fundamental truth that all sin is at bottom selfishness. There is really no other sin. All offences are, when analyzed, seen to be but allotropic forms of this one. Lust is but the longing to possess, without regard to the good of the thing possessed. Hate is but the cold determination to rid one's self of the person whose existence disturbs his sense of well being. Its final expression is murder, for, as Shylock says, "hateth any man the thing he would not kill?" Theft is selfishness, pure and simple. So of all other "immoralities" whatsoever, they are but expressions of a personal attitude. Christianity, on the other hand, is Altruism. But it is altruism made dynamic. The amazing thing is that it should be persistently presented as self-seeking, raised to its highest power, and given the sanction of a religious obligation. For what else is the exhortation to the indi-

vidual to "seek salvation," to "save his soul"? And what other motive impels the monk and recluse to withdraw from the world of affections in the hope of finding his own highest good? Christ's dictum — which is not a paradox — is, "he that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it." It is the fundamental law of the Kingdom.

Acting as his Father's representative, — and it is little wonder that with this well-beloved Son he was well pleased, — he enters human society. As he moves up and down among men, he finds them that are spiritually akin to himself and to each other. Of these his Kingdom forms itself. It is a relationship not only deeper, but also more real than that of race, or blood, or any earthly tie whatsoever. "Then came his mother and his brothers, and standing outside the throng they called for him. And when they told him, Behold thy mother and thy brothers are outside seeking for you, he answered and said, Who is my mother and my brethren? And looking about among the multitude, he saith, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever will do the will of my Father, he is my brother and my

The Altruistic Life.

sister." What that will is of which he spoke is plain from the whole story. The Sermon on the Mount is the pronunciamento of his Kingdom. It is "Love." "Love even your enemies; do good; do good even to them that despitefully use you and persecute you." His Kingdom has place, therefore, not in the realms of knowledge or morals, but of the affections.

Now, it will probably not be gainsaid that this is the primary article in the constitution of Christ's Kingdom, — in theory. But there are two obstinate difficulties which must be overcome before one can consent to subscribe to it and enroll himself. The first is: "All this is fair and gracious; it is no doubt true in that region which you call the eternal realities, but our lives are to be lived on the surface of the world as we find it. In human life, as it actually exists, to adopt this attitude toward one's fellows is neither practicable nor safe; practically, it could only issue in the disorganization of society and the obliteration of the individual who orders his life thus." What can be answered to this?

Is Christ's Way practicable?

Christ's answer is: "It is practicable, for I have done it; it may or may not be safe,

as the case may be." When it is once admitted that sincere good-will on the part of each man toward every other man would transform this world from a bad place to live in to a good one, the question of its practicability will of necessity take a subordinate place. The thing which is good, and which men know to be good, will in the long run prevail. But the run is a very long one indeed. At the stage of the race where we now are it seems as though the goal would not be reached within any measurable time.

The well-disposed man.

Let us say, then, that our word "love" is probably too strong a term to use for that temper toward one's fellows which Christ prescribes. As a rule, we reserve that word for one supreme and imperious affection. "Well-disposed" is a more accurate expression. The benediction is "to men of good-will." The affectional attitude of the Christian toward all men does not in any wise preclude him from those personal and intimate affections which constitute his own life. Every man is not called upon to love his neighbor's wife in the way he does his own. Nor is he at liberty to allow his complacency to ignore moral differences, and

be pleased with pharisee and harlot and saint alike. What is demanded is that he shall recognize his kinship with all his Father's children, and do for each the real best, — not, maybe, the thing which his brother wants, but the thing which is best for him. To love one's neighbor as one's self does not mean to love him in ways in which one has no business to love himself. That this is practicable has been proven experimentally ever since the first starving cave-dweller shared his bone with a hungry neighbor, or drove away with his club the marauding vagabond who would snatch his children's food.

Is that all?

If one shall say, then, "Is this all? Is Christianity simply to do good to one's fellows?" The answer is, Yes; this is all it is. "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Verily I say unto you that inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

But let no one mislead himself. Because this way of life is simple, it is not easy.

The most exalted doctrines and the most exacting codes present far fewer difficulties. The person one is called upon to feed may be a stranger; the stranger who asks to be taken in may be the man who has done one grievous wrong; the sick man's sickness may be infectious; the man one is called to visit in jail may be the very one who defrauded and bankrupted him before he was sentenced. The difficulty is very great indeed. If I love my enemy, I put myself at his mercy. If I disarm while my opponent holds his sword in hand, he may run me through. If I allow myself to be solicitous about the food and shelter of my poor neighbors, I must withdraw just so much time and energy from my own affairs. If all men, even within a limited area, could be brought to begin this manner of life simultaneously, it might be possible, but how am I to begin alone?

The way to begin is to begin.

Christ's answer is, the way to begin is to begin. He does not pretend to disguise the possible cost. Indeed, it would seem as though he had pointed to every conceivable peril which might daunt the courage of the disciples who first contemplated the experiment. He forewarned them that they should

be hated and persecuted; that men would say all manner of evil concerning them; that they should be cast out of the world's synagogues, and maybe killed. And they were. And so was he. But he assured them that not a hair of their heads should be wasted. There is no such thing as ultimate waste in any of God's kingdoms. But the goal toward which any kingdom moves is reached without regard to any apparent prodigality. This is to be said, however: the Kingdom is now so well established, and comprises so many individuals, that its law of life has been to a large extent adopted by the environing world. There is little danger now and here of crucifixion and the lions. Few men now adopt the law of Selfishness as their guiding principle. Competition as a governing method is surely disappearing from regions which it has controlled for ages. The strange phenomenon is even now being seen, — the principle of competition invoking the aid of national law to safeguard for it its old place in commerce!

The Imperious sanction.

Still, it is true and will for ages be true, that Christ's Way is so arduous that it will not be adopted by any without some imperious sanction. This sanction he provides

when he makes it the way of Life, — not of happiness, but of existence. The Eternal patriarch is waiting, longing for the reign of love throughout his infinite estate. But he waits in eternal patience because there is at work in his universe a force which is sure to correct its confusions. This force works both negatively and positively toward its end. We have already seen that all Sin is Selfishness. We are now ready to see that selfishness, when complete, issues in the extinction of its subject. As the circle of a conscious life contracts into an ever smaller circumference, it tends to become at last only a point, and finally to vanish. This is the process by which a soul is destroyed. It perishes of self-seeking. Infinite selfishness is soul suicide. "For he that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Because such a soul will not help, and is therefore useless for the eternal Father's purpose, it is allowed to follow its own chosen way to extinction, where it can no longer hinder. Allowed to do so? There is no power in the universe which could prevent it, except itself.

How a soul is destroyed.

How a soul becomes eternal.

Over against this the same force operates in the opposite direction. He that spendeth findeth. The outgoing of the soul in love and good-will, so far from dissipating and weakening its own energies, enhances and fortifies them. As we have said before, the affections are the only human faculty incapable of fatigue. Thought grows weary with work; the emotions cannot long sustain stimulations; but love never tires. Many a man has discovered, to his surprise and maybe consternation, that when he begins a task of charity he becomes entangled in it. It overmasters him and his. It draws him out and on to issues larger than he had contemplated, and it does so because through it his own being grows larger and stronger. "For every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. He that abideth in love abideth in God. And what shall it profit a man if he shall gain even the whole world, and lose his own existence in the doing it?" In other words, only he that loveth liveth.

This automatic force is the "Fan in the hand" of the Son of Man, winnowing forever, separating the chaff from the grain on the world's threshing-floor. Thus the king-

dom is being builded. Who belong to it? They who will well to their fellows. Where is it to be seen? Ideally, it should be conterminous with the Church. Actually, it is not so. Some time we may hope it will be so, as the Master contemplated. But candor compels the sad confession that before that time the Church must learn to love. Organizations learn this far more slowly than persons do. There is a great multitude whom no man could number within those societies which we call churches, who would gladly walk together in unity and live as brethren together in one house, who are let and hindered from doing so because the organizations, as such, have not the mind of Christ. Instead of humbling, they exalt themselves; instead of living in harmony, they talk of "the brethren"; instead of considering each the things of another, each seeks the things of its own. It could not be otherwise, since for these many centuries they have thought of the Kingdom as resting upon a Creed and a Code. Some statement of truth addressed to the intelligence, and some formulated commandments to regulate conduct, are regarded as completing the essential equipment of a church.

The Kingdom and the churches.

But neither of these is the organizing principle of the Kingdom. The stuff of which that is built is not supplied by the understanding or the conscience, but the heart. So comes the paradox that a church whose members are generally "children of the Kingdom" may be an organization which exhibits precisely those phenomena which the law of the Kingdom denounces. It may act toward other churches as no Christian would think of acting toward another Christian. In a word, it is loveless. Whether it be true or not that "corporations have no souls," it is approximately true that churches have no hearts. They act, indeed, amazingly like corporations. The first and chief end, to which all else is subordinated, is increase, extension, success. If their doctrine and their discipline be defensible and efficient, they fancy themselves secure.

Waiting for a revival of religion.

He who listens attentively to the multitudinous voices of our world of to-day will learn that it is well disposed toward a revival of religion. But it must be a religion which will satisfy its real longings. Its mind has been for two or three generations stimulated to a preternatural activity. It already begins to show the symptoms of

that lassitude which surfeit causes. It has also received and assimilated the contents of that great generalization which is expressed by "the reign of law." It is no longer in the mood to be moved by a religion of thought or a religion of restraints; but it is groping with all its fingers to find a religion of good-will. General Booth notes with wonder that every revivalistic effort now attempted tends in spite of itself to become a charitable instrumentality. It starts out "to save souls," and it ends up by "going about doing good." The transforming compulsion is nothing else than Christ in the midst of the ages. But because the phenomena of Love are vastly more difficult to organize than those of thought and conscience, they have been looked at askance by those who would translate the Kingdom into some well-rounded and articulated institution. The energy of the Christian world tends steadily to escape from their institutions and to express itself in good will. Why not recognize in this the working of a true instinct? Why should not the Church make the presence of this spirit in the individual the condition, and the only condition, of membership? Does

it not in its actual working expose itself to the rebuke which the disciple met when he forbade a man to cast out devils "because he followeth not with us," or those others who would have kept the foolish little children from him? Is there a church on earth to-day which will open its gates hospitably to the man who says simply that he wills well to his fellows, and that in the Son of Man his soul recognizes the Son of God? And if it be true that of such are the Kingdom of Heaven, how can the Church, lacking them, represent the Kingdom?

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